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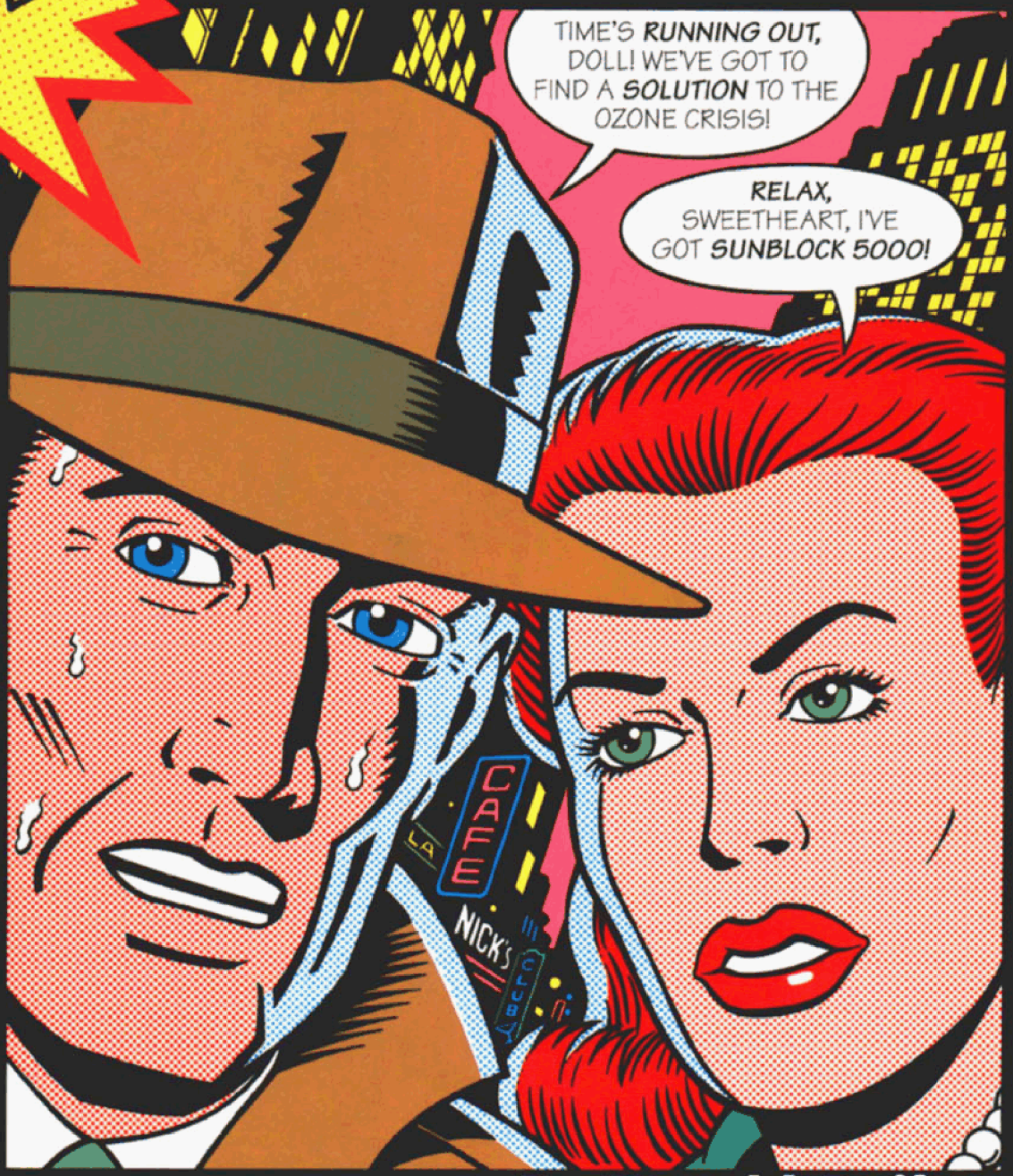

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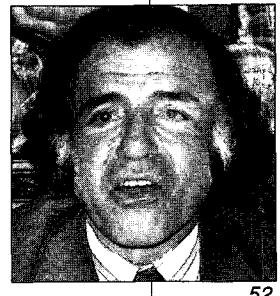

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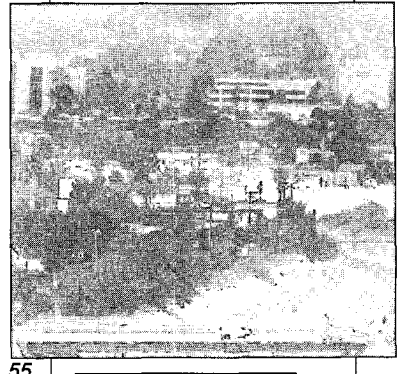

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UNIONS FOREVER?

VIRGINIA I. POSTREL

Federal Express. MCI. Microsoft. Wal-Mart. *USA Today.* Nucor Steel. Apple Computer. Cable News Network.

These companies have two things in common: They represent the future of American enterprise. And they are not unionized.

Indeed, it is hard to imagine a company built on innovation, flexibility, and teamwork that could survive the rigid job categories, work rules, and periodic games of labor-management chicken that characterize union shops. So the question arises, Are unions obsolete? Or have they just been battered by greedy bosses and union-busting Republican politicians?

We've heard a lot of the second charge lately. Unions' share of the work force has been steadily shrinking since its 1945 peak of 35.5, falling to 16.1 percent in 1990. But commentators like to mark unionism's decline from 1981, when Ronald Reagan fired striking air-traffic controllers.

Reagan's legacy was often invoked when Caterpillar's perennial contract dispute turned into Caterpillar's perennial strike (nine since 1944). The company threatened to hire permanent replacements for striking workers. And in negotiations, management sought to do two things unthinkable in traditional labor contracts: to pay new workers on a lower scale than current employees and to base the new contract on Caterpillar's particular circumstances rather than follow the pattern set by John Deere. That threat and those demands struck at the union movement's central tenets.

The rhetoric of solidarity has long obscured the reality of unionism: Unions drive up wages by pitting workers against workers, insiders against outsiders. Through a combination of social sanctions, physical intimidation, and government favoritism, a union maintains a worker cartel. That's why hiring permanent replacements is management's most powerful weapon and why union allies in Congress want to outlaw it.

Union supporters like to talk about the "right to strike" as a basic principle of democracy. But it's an awfully fuzzy one. In labor law, it means you can quit your job, in concert with your fellow workers, and get it back later—sort of. Whether your employer has to give you the job back depends on a lot of mind reading by government officials. Were negotiations "at an impasse"? Was management "bargaining in good faith"? Was the union?

The real right to strike is something very different from a guaranteed job. It means, quite simply, the right of workers to withhold their services at the same time, without fear of civil or criminal sanctions. As such, it is a fundamental right of free people.

And it is a potent bargaining tool. Few private employers can afford simultaneous 100-percent turnover, even temporarily, so a strike threat encourages negotiations. And once a strike is on, resolving it is almost always preferable to training a whole new work force, at least if workers have any special skills. Were the air-traffic control system subject to market pressures, firing the strikers would have been much harder and banning them for life inconceivable.

Thinking of the right to strike in this way suggests the fatal flaw in traditional unionism, and a direction for a reborn union movement. Old-fashioned unionism pretends that all workers are the same, that the only difference among them is whether or not they enjoy union privileges. Insiders are valuable, outsiders worthless, but all insiders are equal. Only seniority distinguishes them.

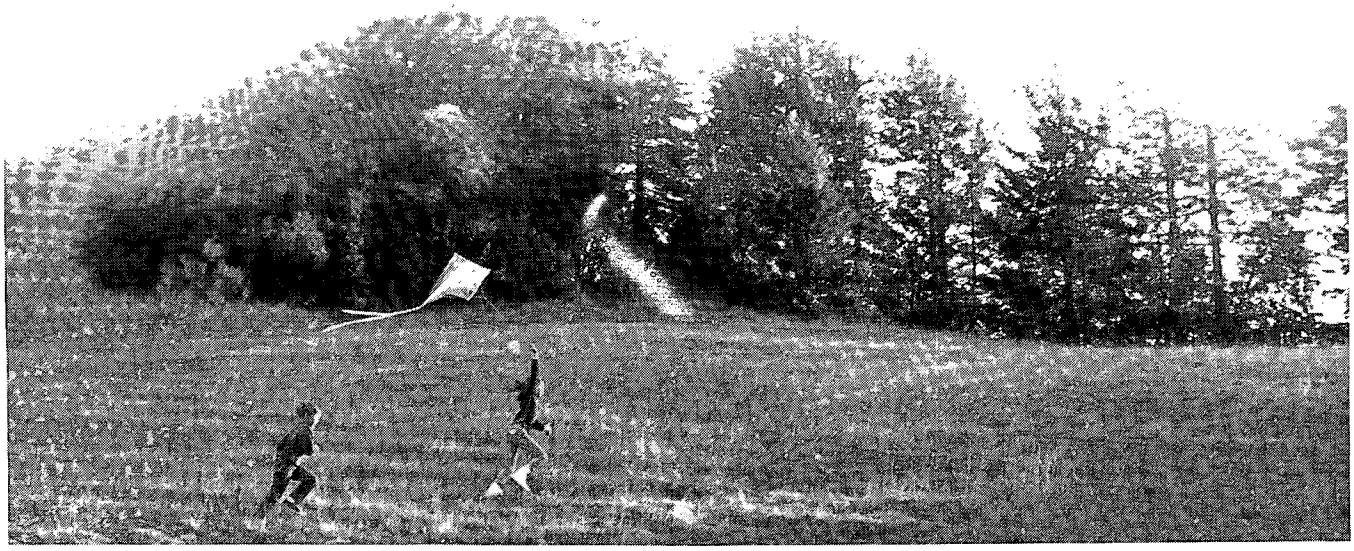
To see the absurdity of this notion, consider the nation's largest union, the National Education Association. Anyone who has ever been a student, parent, or teacher knows that some teachers are extraordinary, some mediocre, and some abysmal. But in defense of union egalitarianism, the NEA attacks every public policy that would reward good teachers or screen out bad ones. On an individual basis, it fights just as hard for an incompetent teacher as for an exemplary one—harder if the bad teacher has seniority.

Treating employees as interchangeable is not only degrading to good workers and infuriating to good managers, it is an invitation to hire permanent replacements. If the only difference is the union label, you might as well pay less.

This notion of employees as homogeneous mush carries over into unions' view of industry. Nowadays, union leaders like to draw damning comparisons to Japanese companies with lifetime employment and greater equality between management's and labor's pay. But U.S. unions eschew the company identification that makes that system work. They do not want workers at competing companies to see themselves as competitors rather than brother unionists.

Hence the zeal for pattern bargaining, which establishes a floor for wages and other contract terms. Under pattern bargaining, neither a company's conditions nor the skill of its workers is as important as the industry to which the union has assigned it.

Caterpillar, which makes mostly construction equipment and exports 60 percent of its output, is arguably not in the



"Our response to...emerging environmental problems must involve a personal commitment from each of us to live environmentally ethical lives — not because it is a requirement of law, but because it is an essential component of our inherent responsibility to our neighbors, our children, and our planet." —Lee M. Thomas

Chevron

same industry as Deere, which concentrates on farm implements and sells mostly domestically. Breaking the pattern is far more important to the company's future flexibility than any specific dispute over wages and benefits. And what better time to make such a demand than in the midst of a recession that shoved Caterpillar $404 million into the red last year and pushed local unemployment to 9 percent?

Fortunately for Caterpillar workers, they are *not* the same as either workers off the street or Deere employees. They are highly skilled both in their trades and in their specific knowledge of Caterpillar's production. And they are well paid. In this eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, a federal mediator made both sides blink.

American unions face a choice. On it depends their future.

They can continue to pursue their current course, taking their old-fashioned ideology to the only workplaces where it still applies—the monopoly shops owned and operated by government. Or they can reinvent unions as organizations that primarily serve workers rather than fight management.

The first is the road to short-term gains and long-term disaster. Public-employee unions have it easy at the bargaining table. Their opponents are politicians who can collect from the "customers" whatever the union demands; taxpayers, unlike car buyers, have no choice. Already, the NEA has displaced the Teamsters as the nation's largest union. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, is number four, surpassing the autoworkers.

But this strategy casts union members not as the hard-working salt of the earth but as another special-interest group ripping off the taxpayers, most of whom also work for a living. It will create both a tax revolt and a backlash that will taint all of organized labor.

And, as the air-traffic controllers can testify, it is a lot easier for a resolute politician to fire a bunch of highly paid public employees, and to survive the dislocations of retraining a whole new work force, than it is for a company manager to clear the assembly lines. The government employer faces no competitors with well-trained workers; the public is more sympathetic to management that represents taxpayers; and plenty of replacements will cross the picket lines.

Rather than commit suicide this way, unions can adopt an entrepreneurial vision. Instead of treating workers as indistinguishable factory drones, they can offer them skills that will command both respect and high wages. That means getting into the training business—a business companies often neglect for fear of investing in workers who will then move on to other jobs. As umbrella organizations supported by dues, unions wouldn't face that disincentive.

And "training" does not necessarily mean "retraining." It means continuous improvement of employed workers. It means helping people keep up with new technologies, new equipment, new quality techniques. And, given the state of American education, it means reading, writing, and arithmetic—and English lessons for the foreign born.

In a working world where upward mobility often depends on literal mobility, national unions can offer other services to their members: portable benefits tied to the person rather than the job; a national "hiring hall," a computerized listing of job openings; loans to pay for relocation; a community in a new town. The list is limited only by worker needs and union creativity. The point is to invest in workers and to help workers collectively invest in themselves, to make union workers especially valuable to employers and unions especially valuable to employees.

Achieving such a vision requires a fundamental change in the way unions see themselves. Such change is difficult—far harder than picking political fights. But the alternative is an ignominious death. ■

BLINDED BY PSEUDOSCIENCE

RICK HENDERSON

Last May, Environmental Protection Agency chief William Reilly asked a panel of four outside scientists to review the quality of research conducted at his agency. In March, the scientists reported their findings. The EPA flunked.

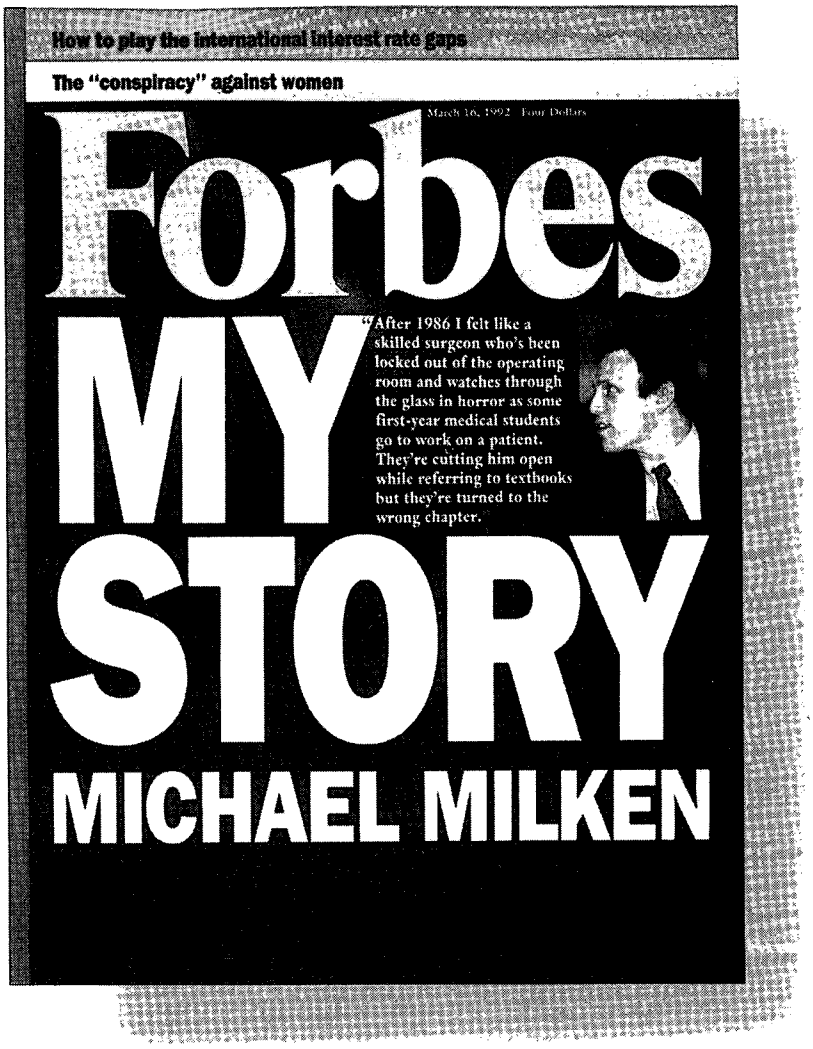
Among the panel's conclusions: Agency insiders and the general public believe the EPA adjusts its science to fit its policies; the agency doesn't subject all its research to peer review or other quality checks; and, when assessing human health risks, EPA researchers rely too heavily on animal tests.

To correct these deficiencies, Reilly has asked Congress to boost his agency's research budget by 50 percent. A poker player would call this "throwing good money after bad."

Unverified, internally generated studies do not merely waste money. They can become dangerous weapons for activists or regulators with an agenda. Consider, for example, the battle over the EPA's reevaluation of dioxin. Once deemed "the most toxic synthetic chemical known to man," dioxin has recently been on the road to scientific redemption.

Infinitesimal amounts of dioxin can cause cancer in some animals. But humans and animals respond differently to some toxic substances; dioxin appears to be one.

At an October 1990 conference on dioxin cosponsored by the EPA, researchers reported that, unlike most carcinogens, dioxin does not damage DNA. Instead it links with proteins inside cells. *If* dioxin accumulates in these cells, *and* they are damaged by other carginogens, cancer *may* result. The conference chairmen stated that "there exists a [dioxin] dose level below which no biologically significant effects can occur."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MICHAEL MILKEN

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No guts. No story.

Environmental activists were not amused by this revisionist line. Green groups have long sought expensive regulations on industrial processes using chlorine and producing dioxin as a byproduct; the new scientific view of dioxin may stop these regulations. And proving one environmentalist scare story wrong casts doubt on others—from Alar to the greenhouse effect.

The EPA's dioxin research continues. And it seems that selected sections of the review, loaded with scary rumors and exaggerated assertions, have been pitched to the popular press. A story in the February 20 *Wall Street Journal* points to "research suggesting dioxin could be more, not less, dangerous than previously thought." The April 6 *U.S. News & World Report* says "dioxin looks more dangerous to human health than ever."

But most dioxin researchers disagree. While dioxin is dangerous, they say, there is no cause for alarm. An epidemiological study published last January in *The New England Journal of Medicine* shows no direct correlation between cancer rates in animals exposed to trace levels of dioxin and rates in dioxin-exposed humans.

The recent press stories, however, rely on animal studies linking dioxin with immune-system damage and abnormal production of such hormones as testosterone. They list no corresponding research on humans to back up these assertions.

Interestingly, dioxin panelist George Carlo wrote a scathing letter to *The Wall Street Journal*, noting that its reporter relied heavily on two toxicologists "whose views on dioxin have proved to be quite inconsistent" with mainstream research.

Medical researchers link exposure to toxics with specific diseases. Skeptics can then challenge these connections with research of their own. Medical science depends upon regular patterns and recurring behaviors.

Environmental activists who shun the rigors of science focus instead on ill-defined infirmities, such as "immune-system suppression." They allege that people whose immune systems are even temporarily impaired become hypersensitive to chemicals and can develop all manner of diseases.

Thus, they can connect any unexplained ailment—the *U.S. News* story links "pollutants like dioxin" with Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease—with chemical exposure. No medical research supports this.

The unfounded frenzy over dioxin suggests a fatal flaw in all EPA research: It isn't independent. Funded by an agency dedicated to regulating industry rather than understanding the natural world, it is politicized from its very inception. Publishing in peer-reviewed journals could ameliorate this flaw. Leaking scare stories to a credulous press does not.

Rather than giving Reilly his 50-percent increase, Congress should stop funding in-house research conducted by any government regulatory agency. The alternative is more political science.

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IN MEMORIAM:
F. A. Hayek

Few individuals live lives that span a century. Fewer still leave work that reshapes it.

Born in 1899, Friedrich A. Hayek saw most of the 20th century—the life and death and life of Central Europe, the rise and fall of socialism. His death March 23 leaves an intellectual legacy unmatched in this century outside the sciences.

Hayek was not simply a "free-market economist," as *The New York Times*'s obituary put it, nor even a mere Nobel Laureate. (He received the economics prize in 1974.) And though its historical significance can scarcely be overstated, *The Road to Serfdom* only begins to suggest the dimensions of his thought.

Hayek wrote economic theory and philosophy of science, books for the general public and books for his fellow scholars. He expounded on law and speculated on anthropology. He held Ph.D.s in three fields (economics, law, and political science) and brought all of social science, philsophy, and the history of the West to bear on the questions of the good society.

The sweep of his work, and its ambition, bespeak another age. Yet no one reading Hayek in centuries hence would fail to place him in his time.

He was, in this important sense, the last classical liberal and the first...what? He himself could not find the right term, settling in the end on the rather obscure "Old Whig."

"What I want," he wrote, "is a word which describes the party of life, the party that favors free growth and spontaneous evolution."

In a century of fragments, Hayek saw life whole. Yet this wholeness did not carry with it uniformity. Indeed, unlike the "socialists of all parties" to whom he dedicated *The Road to Serfdom*, he placed complexity at the center of his vision. His world was one of fractals, of infinitely complex forms—the world of individual choices and particularized knowledge.

He defined a free society as one "in which all are allowed to use their knowledge for their purposes, restrained only by rules of just conduct of universal application."

Central planning is impossible, in Hayek's view, because no single person (or bureau) can possibly know enough about the details of economic and social choices. Only the individuals involved possess that knowledge, dispersing it throughout society. And only by robbing individuals of their individual plans can central planners hope to achieve any results, however inefficient.

Socialism, by which Hayek meant the centralized organization of society, leads therefore not only to poverty but to tyranny. It wipes away the complexity of society and the diversity of individuals.

And it exacts an unknown toll: "Since the value of freedom rests on the opportunities it provides for unforeseen and unpredictable actions, we will rarely know what we lose through a particular restriction on freedom."

Upon his death, many who long admired Hayek's work proclaimed his victory, pointing to the fall of communism and the discrediting of socialism. But Hayek's picture of a complex, evolving, dynamic world is far from accepted.

In a postscript to *The Constitution of Liberty* titled "Why I Am Not a Conservative," Hayek set his vision against that of conservatism. "One of the fundamental traits of the conservative attitude is a fear of change, a timid distrust of the new as such, while the liberal position is based upon courage and confidence, on a preparedness to let change run its course even if we cannot predict where it will lead," he wrote.

"There would not be much to object to if the conservatives merely disliked too rapid change in institutions and public policy; here the case for caution and slow process is indeed strong. But the conservatives are inclined to use the powers of government to prevent change or to limit its rate to whatever appeals to the more timid mind. In looking forward, they lack the faith in the spontaneous forces of adjustment which makes the liberal accept changes without apprehension, even though he does not know how the necessary adaptations will be brought about.

"It is, indeed, part of the liberal attitude to assume that, especially in the economic field, the self-regulating forces of the market will somehow bring about the required adjustments to new conditions, although no one can foretell how they will do this in a particular instance. There is perhaps no single factor contributing so much to people's frequent reluctance to let the market work as their inability to conceive how some necessary balance, between demand and supply, between exports and imports, or the like, will be brought about without deliberate control. The conservative feels safe and content only if he is assured that some higher wisdom watches and supervises change, only if he knows that some authority is charged with keeping the change 'orderly.'"

Socialism may be in retreat, but the world is full of such conservatives.

Open any newspaper, turn on any talk show, and you will find them, begging for a plan, begging to be led—or to lead. Left, right, and center, they share the same faith: that someone must take charge.

And here is the paradox: Would-be leaders usually promise change, often radical change. But the change they seek is in individuals and in those free institutions that permit individuals to make troublesome choices, whether about sex, schools, or Japanese cars. Once these "change agents" have altered society, they want it to stay put.

Hayek's vision was quite the opposite. And, as his century draws to a close, it is his vision we need.

—Virginia I. Postrel

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LETTERS

Doubting Thomas

Edith Efron has written the most perceptive recap of the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings that I have yet run across ("Native Son," Feb.). Congratulations all around.

John G.B. Howland
Glenview, IL

WHEN I READ the article "Native Son," I thought I was reading something in Mother Jones magazine. It sounded like their party line: "Capitalist society is by definition racist and rotten to the core." It just goes to prove, if you have a big enough stake in spotting racism, you'll see it everywhere, as Edith Efron obviously does: If President Bush didn't nominate Thomas to replace Marshall, he would have been a racist. Since he did nominate him, Efron feels he was racist. If the committee didn't take Thomas seriously, they would be racist. Since they did evaluate him seriously, they are racist.

Mary Segall
Scarborough, Ontario

EDITH EFRON DEFINES a *racist* as one who "simply does not treat black individuals the same way he treats whites." Efron would be fairer to define the racist as one who behaves this way toward blacks *because they are black* and not for other reasons.

A consequence of Efron's overly broad definition is that a white who happens to deal more negatively with a black than with another white, for any reason (such as incompetence on the job), can be accused of racism even though the white's action does not necessarily stem from racial prejudice. Charges of racism on such a ground are now part and parcel of corporate life throughout America, and it forms the philosophical basis of many of today's affirmative action programs.

Those who adhere to Efron's definition of racism have allowed affirmative action to become a program of coerced advantage through uncritical racial preference, supported philosophically by new linguistic definitions. Efron's definition provides many minority individuals with the legal and psychological weasel hole of "racism" whenever the stresses of responsibility become uncomfortable. It encourages many not to bother to become more competent and productive.

Christopher D. Costanzo
Washington, DC

School's Out

David Bernstein ("Why Johnny Can't Pray," Feb.) exaggerates the difficulties of resolving public-school religious-liberty problems and tries to make a voucher plan for public funding of all schools—public, sectarian private, and secular private—look like a good replacement for our present arrangement of church-state separation and public funds for public schools only. But his effort just won't wash.

Voucher plans would compel citizens to pay for sectarian institutions in violation of everyone's fundamental right to support only the religious institutions of one's free choice.

They would compel citizens to support schools over which they would have no meaningful control, schools which practice forms of discrimination and in-

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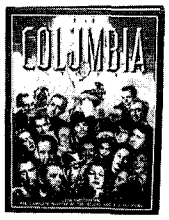

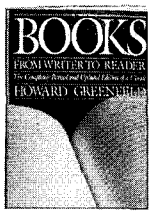

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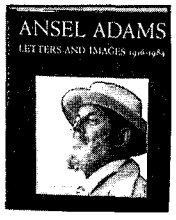

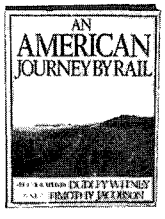

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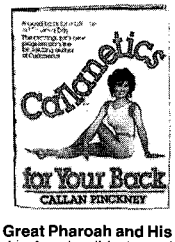

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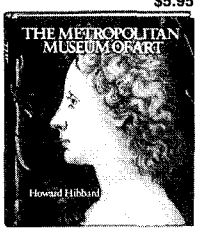

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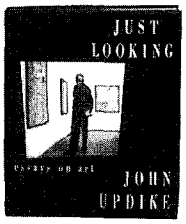

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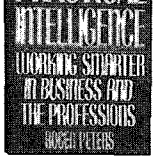

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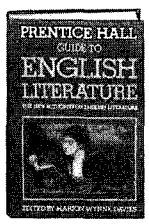

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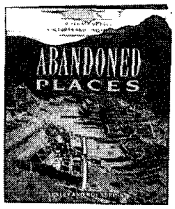

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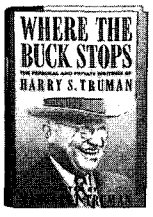

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doctrination intolerable in publicly supported institutions. Vouchers would thus fragment our children into a multiplicity of inefficient, generally inferior sectarian and ideological enclaves.

The costs of operating such a fragmented school "system" plus providing transportation for them (Pittsburgh now spends an average of $900 per year per student for busing nonpublic students, far over the public-school average) would be astronomical.

A fragmented educational system would destroy the bonds of social cohesion and put us farther behind in the competition with the Japanese and Europeans. Finally, the latest public-opinion polls (in 1991) show that Bernstein's voucher plan is opposed by 68 percent to 27 percent.

Edd Doerr
Executive Director
Americans for Religious Liberty
Silver Spring, MD

KUDOS TO DAVID BERNSTEIN for taking the ACLU to task for its contradictory positions on education vouchers and religious freedom in the schools. However, he may have been misinformed when he was told that "the ACLU has not yet taken a position on vouchers." Not only do they have a position, it is far from "sympathetic."

A recent mailing for prospective ACLU members called vouchers an "attack on racial equality" designed to "undermine the nation's public schools," to allow "further flight of middle-class" whites to the suburbs, and to "force minority parents to send their children to poorly funded public schools."

Christian L. Struble
Houston, TX

Alcohol Treatment

In the March issue of REASON, you published a letter from James Byrd of Flower Mound, Texas. His letter referred to our Schick Hospital in Fort Worth. To set the record straight, the Fort Worth Schick Shadel Hospital is not out of business.

We started our medical treatment for alcohol addiction back in 1935 in Seattle, Washington, the same year A.A. started. However, medical hospitals were not allowed to advertise until 1979, so most people had not heard about or did not understand our treatment. Many confuse Schick's mild, medical counter-conditioning (aversion therapy) with the use of the drug Antabuse. There is very little similarity.

In 1970, the Fort Worth Hospital started helping alcoholics. Both our Seattle and Forth Worth Schick hospitals are still going strong. My life was saved by the program in 1972 at Forth Worth.

The Schick treatment consists of 1) Detoxification to withdraw the body from alcohol. Under medical supervision this is safely accomplished with very little discomfort. Detoxification eliminates the body's need for alcohol, but it does not affect the craving-reflex programmed into the subconscious memory. 2) Aversion therapy to counter the alcohol-craving reflex, so that the sight, taste, and smell of alcohol become repugnant. Then the subconscious memory reflexes avoid alcohol instead of reaching for it. 3) Counseling and education about why alcoholics become addicted and what they need to do to stay sober.

The treatment is not frightening, and no pain is involved. The medical staff is professional and caring. No alcohol enters the blood stream during the counter conditioning therapy. Finally, a two-year support program proactively stays in contact with the grads to advise and support them. Schick also has its own grad groups that act as support groups, and we also recommend all other support groups including A.A., SOS, etc.

The Schick program has a short hospital stay because of its intensive structure. We have consistently gone to outside researchers to check the efficiency of the program.

Michael Frawley
Vice President
Schick Health Services
Studio City, CA

Speaking Out

The item "Uncivil War" (Balance Sheet, Feb.) exaggerated differences within the ACLU concerning sexual harassment in the workplace. Contrary to your implication, there is broad consensus on the governing principles—most importantly, that any harassment claim must be resolved in a manner that respects employees' free-speech rights as well as their rights to be free from gender-based discrimination.

As in many areas of free-speech jurisprudence, whether any particular expression in the workplace constitutes protected free speech or prohibited harassment entails a fact-specific, contextual determination, turning on all the relevant facts and circumstances. Accordingly, it is not surprising that reasonable civil libertarians who are committed to the same basic principles will disagree about how those principles should apply to particular expression in a certain factual context. For example, there is general agreement that sexually explicit posters that employees put on the walls of a common work area should ordinarily be viewed as protected speech rather than proscribable harassment. At the other extreme, there is general agreement that one employee's unwanted placing of such materials into the locker of another employee constitutes regulable harassment.

In between those two extremes, some hard questions arise. For example, if the only posters displayed in the common work area are sexually explicit depictions of women, and that is an area where all workers are required to spend time, could such a display be regarded as the harassment of a captive audience? And how would the analysis be affected by the fact that there was a well-documented record of pervasive and persistent harassing conduct throughout the particular workplace? Only those who reflexively exalt values of free speech over those of equality, or vice versa, will contend that there are easy answers to questions of this type.

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FDA Restrictions on Disclosure of Lifesaving Medical Information Kill 100,000 Americans Every Year

About 1.5 million Americans suffer a heart attack every year. Over 500,000 die. Of that number, at least **100,000** people die prematurely because they are not taking a simple, very inexpensive over the counter drug that has been shown in over a dozen scientific studies to substantially reduce the risk of heart attacks. Yet, the FDA explicitly forbids the drug's manufacturers from educating the public about these widely accepted effects on labels or in advertising. The amount required to provide substantial protection costs only about a penny a day. ***The drug is aspirin.***

The first published report on a protective effect of aspirin was in 1948. Many other studies followed. In 1989, the results of the huge Physicians' Health Study of the effects of low dose aspirin on heart attack incidence were reported as front page headlines in newspapers. The study involved over 22,000 physician subjects, was funded by the government (National Institutes of Health), and was conducted by Harvard University Medical School. ***The published study reported that low dose aspirin (an aspirin every other day) reduced the risk of a first heart attack by 44% in men over 50 years of age.*** (The evidence on the effects of aspirin on women, who were not in this study but have been included in others, suggest similar effects.)

Recently, Dr. Charles H. Hennekens, head of the Physicians' Health Study, reported additional results* from the study that indicate that beta carotene may also provide protection against heart attack. (Beta carotene was included in the study to follow- up scores of earlier research studies indicating that it has cancer preventive properties.) In a subgroup of 330 subjects who had pre-existing cardiovascular disease, those receiving beta carotene alone had a 41% reduction in major incidents (such as heart attack and stroke) compared to placebo, while those receiving both beta carotene and aspirin had a reduction of 100% (there were no major incidents in this group, compared to 17 in the placebo group). The FDA permits no health claims of any kind for beta carotene.

The FDA vs. the First Amendment – How You Can Help

The Life Extension Foundation is distributing **First Amendment Aspirin Plus**, which contains (per tablet) 175 mg. of magnesium – buffered aspirin (equal to one half aspirin), 83,000 iu. beta carotene, and 20 mg. of vitamin B-6, a nutrient required for cardiovascular health. Durk Pearson & Sandy Shaw** designed the formulation for their own use and have also contributed their formulation's royalties to the Foundation's ***First Amendment Litigation Fund.***

Inexpensive Remedy Dramatically Reduces Heart Attack Risk in Major Government Sponsored Research Study

The label contains the scientifically justified but FDA unapproved health claim about reducing heart attack risk with low dose aspirin.

Please help fund our litigation with the FDA over freedom of speech and of the press all the way to the Supreme Court. Contribute $25 and receive your very own bottle of First Amendment Aspirin Plus. (This is less than you would probably pay for the same amount of beta carotene alone in a health food store.) If you contribute $100, we will send you *five* 100 tablet bottles.

Send your contributions to the:

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Warning: Some people should not use aspirin, including those who are allergic to it, have an active ulcer, have a bleeding disorder or are already taking a prescription anticoagulant.

References: "Final Report on the Aspirin Component of the Ongoing Physicians' Health Study," *New England Journal of Medicine* Vol. 321 No. 3: pp. 129-135, July 20, 1989; "An Apple a Day or An Aspirin a Day?," *Archives of Internal Medicine* Vol. 151: pp. 1066-1069, June 1991; In Rita Ricardo-Campbell's article "*Drug Lag: Federal Government Decision Making*," (Hoover Institution Press, 1976), she describes (pg. 48), the discontinuation of a proposed 1969 double blind placebo controlled clinical study by Squibb on aspirin for heart attack prevention because the company was discouraged by the many rules and regulations imposed by the FDA, including requiring them to submit to the FDA ***all known studies on aspirin.*** The company considered this unreasonable scrutiny for a drug that had been used since 1899!

*Results announced at the Nov. 12-15 1990 American Heart Association scientific meeting in Dallas, Texas.

***Pearson & Shaw have no control over the independent nonprofit Life Extension Foundation.*

The disagreement within the ACLU about these fact-specific issues reflects our organizational commitment to both sets of values, as well as our encouragement of robust debate within our ranks—both, in my view, positive phenomena.

Nadine Strossen
President
American Civil Liberties Union
New York, NY

Keeping Score on Sematech

The article on Sematech ("DRAM Scam," Feb.), though extensive, repeated many of the same tired criticisms of the consortium, some of which are not only inaccurate but are outright false.

Furthermore, while I was pleased to note that you identified the author, Brink Lindsey, as an attorney who represents foreign clients in international trade matters, you would have better served your readers by informing them that Lindsey and his Washington, D.C., law firm represent a variety of Japanese clients.

A common misconception is that Sematech's charter expires at the end of five years. There is nothing in the enabling legislation that limits Sematech to five years. The parties involved decided to make at least a five-year commitment to demonstrate their willingness to support a long-term research-and-development project. Although the federal government agreed in principle to participate in the consortium, Congress required that the Department of Defense funds be authorized and appropriated on an annual basis.

Another misconception is that Sematech's initial charter was to put the U.S. industry back into the dynamic random-access memory-chip business. Although concern about the loss of the DRAM business helped underscore the need for Sematech, there was never a plan for the consortium to produce DRAMs. In fact, Sematech is a nonprofit R&D entity and, as such, is not allowed to manufacture any product for sale. Sematech's only product is the knowledge it generates for its member companies and the U.S. government.

Lindsey criticizes Sematech for focusing efforts on improving the equipment and materials industry. Until we embarked on our program, nobody really understood how much the semiconductor material and equipment industry in this country had eroded. When that problem was understood, it became clear it was unreasonable to expect that we could have a strong, viable semiconductor industry in this country without a strong, viable equipment and materials industry.

And our efforts are paying off. For example, Motorola opened its state-of-the-art MOS-11 semiconductor manufacturing facility in Austin, Texas, last year. Motorola had estimated that it would have to purchase about 80 percent of the equipment for that $650-million facility from foreign sources, but when it opened, it contained 80 percent U.S. equipment. Motorola gave the U.S. suppliers—and Sematech—the credit for this dramatic turnaround.

Much has been made of allegations about Sematech's technology holdbacks. But the example Lindsey cites with Westech is simply untrue. The president of Westech has publicly stated that if an order had been received for his equipment, he would have honored it. Sematech's policy is to give members the right of first priority for new equipment. Once the equipment is certified for sale, it is made available to every company, including foreign corporations. We understand that for us to succeed, our equipment and materials suppliers must be able to compete globally.

As for the allegations that Sematech uses kick-back agreements, that is also patently false. Of more than 50 joint development contracts and equipment-improvement programs underway at Sematech, only three are with Sematech members. Each was selected because it possessed a distinctive expertise for the task at hand and was judged by Sematech officials as the most capable of achieving the desired results. The members, like other Sematech contractors, must perform the work and are held accountable for their performance.

Sematech has entered into two additional contracts with its members to act as test-and-demonstration sites for newly developed or improved equipment where it is impractical or too expensive for Sematech to do the testing itself. The equipment is paid for by Sematech and no member company receives a reduction in its dues as a result of these arrangements.

We believe a fair report of the facts would find that Sematech benefits the nation by keeping significant revenue, employment, and technical expertise in the United States. Our mission is to enhance America's semiconductor manufacturing, which is vital to the nation's economic future. We believe we are succeeding in that mission.

Miller Bonner
Director of Communications
Sematech
Austin, TX

Mr. Lindsey replies: Mr. Bonner correctly points out that Sematech has no explicit, statutory expiration date. Nevertheless, as far as federal funding was concerned, there is no denying that Sematech was originally sold as a five-year project; Sematech officials repeatedly stated that they only wanted government money for five years and no more. This was the general understanding on which administration and congressional support for Sematech was based. Moreover, the original commitment by Sematech's 14 founding members to participate in and fund the consortium was expressly limited to five years. By the way, two members — LSI Logic and Micron—have announced that they will not be re-enlisting after their commitment expires this year.

It is true that Sematech, once established in March 1987, never sought to manufacture DRAMs for sale. But as I stated in my article, in the initial planning stages Sematech's organizers seriously considered getting into the DRAM business. Intel, in particular, strongly supported this approach. IBM's opposition carried the day, however, and Sematech was launched as an R&D venture only.

I granted in my article that Sematech has achieved some minor successes in helping U.S. semiconductor equipment

suppliers. The larger issue, though, is whether there is any public interest in bankrolling this assistance with taxpayers' money. Mr. Bonner's bald assertions notwithstanding, there is no evidence that dependence on foreign suppliers is undermining the competitiveness of U.S. chipmakers.

Regarding technology holdbacks, there is simply no controversy that—as I reported—Sematech used to include holdback clauses in its contracts with suppliers but does so no longer. This is according to Sematech spokesman Buddy Price, who not only admitted to me that such holdbacks were used but actually defended the practice. Westech's president may deny that he was forbidden from selling equipment to non-Sematech members, but that's what the contract that he signed stated—according to a December 9, 1991, *Business Week* article. (T.J. Rodgers of Cypress supplied a copy of the Westech contract to the *Business Week* reporter.)

Nothing Mr. Bonner says about Sematech's kickback agreements contradicts my point, which is that in some cases Sematech has given its members very expensive machines to use for free. Mr. Bonner's points go to the scale of corruption, not to the fact of it.

Finally, I note that Mr. Bonner couldn't resist the ad hominem argument that I am somehow biased because, as a lawyer, I have represented Japanese companies. While on the subject of disclosing affiliations with the Japanese, allow me to rattle off a few of the joint ventures and strategic alliances between Sematech members and Japanese companies: AT&T and NEC, IBM and Toshiba, Intel and Sharp, Motorola and Toshiba, Texas Instruments and Hitachi, and the list goes on. I've got nothing against linkups, but it's galling to see these thoroughly internationalized companies wrap themselves in the flag for a few scraps of federal pork.

As it turns out, I recently left private legal practice to join the Cato Institute as director of regulatory studies. Although a hired mouthpiece like Mr. Bonner may not understand this, my opinion of Sematech has not changed even though my employer has.

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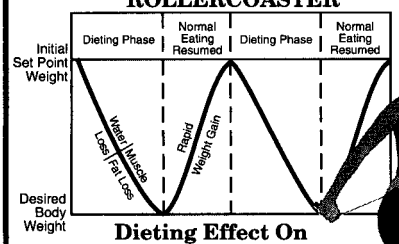

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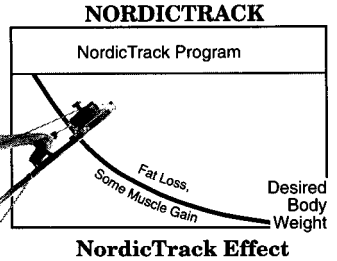

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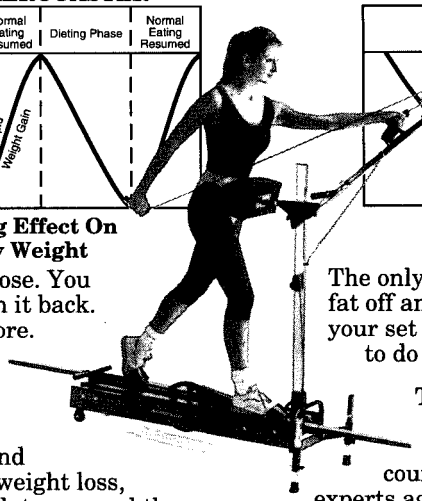

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Weed Out

The federal government's medical-marijuana program, overseen by three bureaucracies that required complicated paperwork and imposed mysterious delays, was not designed to work. When it seemed that it might, it had to be canceled.

For 15 years Robert C. Randall and his organization, the Alliance for Cannabis Therapeutics, have been advising patients seeking to obtain marijuana for treatment of various ailments (including glaucoma, muscle spasms, and the nausea and vomiting associated with AIDS and cancer chemotherapy) under the Compassionate Investigative New Drug program. In recent years ACT has vastly simplified the application process for doctors and patients, shortening the time required from about 50 hours to about 15 minutes.

As a result, the Food and Drug Administration, accustomed to receiving one or two requests for marijuana each year, saw a flood of hundreds, many from AIDS patients, in 1990 and 1991. Last summer James Mason, head of the Public Health Service, announced that the medical marijuana program had been suspended. In March a PHS spokesman, citing concerns about the effect of marijuana on people with weakened immune systems, said the program had been eliminated.

"The program was threatening to make a charade out of the prohibition," Randall says. "The government had a contradictory policy. On the one hand, it argued that marijuana had no medical value. On the other hand, it argued that anyone who medically needed marijuana could get it through this wonderful program."

About a week after the PHS announcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration again refused to make marijuana available by prescription. The DEA was responding to a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit that said the agency's criteria for classifying drugs are nebulous and illogical. DEA chief Robert C. Bonner reiterated the agency's position that marijuana has no legitimate medical use. He failed to note that the DEA's own administrative law judge had reached the opposite conclusion, based on the same evidence, in 1988.

"They're trying to put this issue to rest, and they've done it with a two-pronged approach," says Greg Porter, director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, which has been fighting the DEA in court for 22 years. "They've effectively eliminated any future legal access to marijuana, short of Congress enacting some sort of legislation." Porter says Congress may take up the issue this session; Randall is advising patients to contact their representatives.

Kevin Zeese, vice president of the Drug Policy Foundation, notes that neither the PHS nor the DEA allowed a period for public comment before making their decisions final. "Both agencies acted in secret," he says. "They're so insecure about what they're doing, they had to hide it."

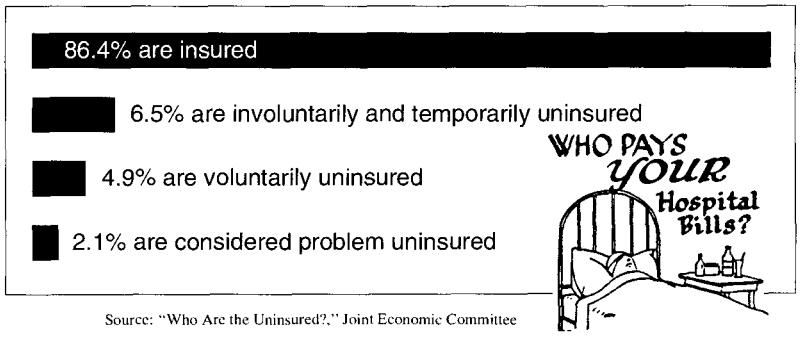
—Jacob Sullum

Robert C. Randall, RIGHT, has helped people like AIDS patients Barbra and Kenneth Jenks obtain legal marijuana.

Insuring Accuracy

There are approximately 35 million people without health insurance in the United States. But a study by the House Republicans on Congress's Joint Economic Committee says this "snapshot" look at the uninsured may overstate the problem. First, the study found that many of the uninsured can actually afford insurance. (More than 5 percent of those making $15 an hour or more are not insured.) These are mostly young people. Most of them have probably decided to forgo health insurance. Of the involuntarily uninsured—the unemployed, low-wage earners, and those who have been denied coverage—the study found that over time most regain insurance. Meanwhile, of course, others become involuntarily uninsured. The House Republicans contend that the chronically and involuntarily uninsured population is about 5.8 million people.

INSURANCE STATUS OF THE U.S. POPULATION


86.4% are insured
6.5% are involuntarily and temporarily uninsured
4.9% are voluntarily uninsured
2.1% are considered problem uninsured
WHO PAYS YOUR Hospital Bills?

Source: "Who Are the Uninsured?," Joint Economic Committee

JOEY TRANCHINA

Organ Rifts

Nearly 25,000 Americans are on waiting lists for organ transplants. Each day, reports the National Kidney Foundation, five or six die. Though the foundation wants to increase the supply of organs, it can only use educational campaigns: Federal law prohibits the sale of human organs.

But the Kidney Foundation is exploring some controversial proposals to address the organ shortage. Earlier this year, it held four "town meetings" to discuss them. The most sensitive discussions involved financial incentives. India allows direct payment to living organ donors. (See "Spare Parts," Aug./Sept. 1990.) Pittsburgh attorney A. Bruce Bowden, the foundation's vice president, notes that not only are such practices illegal in most countries, most people consider it "anathema" even to talk about them.

But others suggest financially assisting organ donors or their survivors. Some propose letting recipient families pay a donor's funeral costs. Others imagine an optional survivor death benefit as a payroll deduction administered by Social Security. Financial consultants have contemplated a "futures" market for transplantable organs.

Financial incentives present a challenge: encouraging donors who might not otherwise come forward while sustaining the charitable impulses of people who donate voluntarily. Living donors and donor survivors often bristle at discussions of financial compensation. Bowden says any payment could lead to a backlash from altruistic donors.

The Kidney Foundation and the United Network for Organ Sharing plan to survey public attitudes toward incentives and other controversies surrounding organ donations. Widespread support for some form of compensation to donors could encourage congressional action to set up a few pilot programs. "We don't endorse any proposal," Bowden says. The foundation simply "is interested in locating a donor organ for everyone who needs one."

—Rick Henderson

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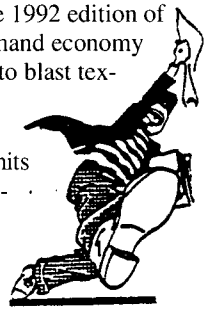
BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Left Out. Social democracies turn to the market. India, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden cut taxes, sell state firms, and open markets. In *The Washington Post*, Indian Finance Minister Monmohan Singh defends budget cuts and privatization: "We cannot simply spend our way into prosperity."

Another Convert. In 1989, Keynesian Paul Samuelson wrote that under Soviet-style central planning an "economy can function and even thrive." But the 1992 edition of his ubiquitous *Economics* text states, "The blunt control of the command economy cannot match...a modern mixed economy." Look for Fritz Hollings to blast textile quotas next.



Broadcast News. The FCC slashes broadcast regulations. Old limits let one company own no more than 24 radio stations; new rules let a single owner have 60 outlets nationwide. By year's end, reports *The Washington Post*, FCC Chairman Alfred Sikes "will push to eliminate rules limiting broadcasters, cable TV companies and the telephone industry."

Drug Bust. German appeals judge Wolfgang Nescovic rules laws against marijuana and hashish possession unconstitutional. The judge cites medical studies deeming moderate cannabis use no more harmful than consuming alcohol or tobacco. The German constitution guarantees equality before the law.

Liabilities

Messenger Massacre. A surprise victim of Rubbergate: the General Accounting Office. The House asks the GAO to investigate the bank; it does, and finds dirt. Now a GAO source tells columnists Jack Anderson and Michael Binstein that, come budget time, Congress plans to "shoot the messenger": The GAO will suffer, with staff layoffs likely.

Northern Exposure. Feminist jurisprudes invade Canada. Its Supreme Court redefines obscenity as "sexually explicit material that involves violence or degradation." Since porn "degrades" women more than men, the ruling says, it violates sexual equality laws. The University of Michigan's Catharine MacKinnon, who helped prepare the winning arguments, says obscenity "is what harms women, not what offends our values."

Superbucks. Toxic-waste cleanup will cost plenty: Resources for the Future says $96 billion this decade; the University of Tennessee predicts $1.18 trillion before 2020. Still, *The Economist* reports, the EPA says radon and cigarette smoke pose greater health risks than Superfund sites. Guess where legislators will spend tax dollars?

A Thousand Cuts. Central planners work to hijack the tax code. Moderate Republicans, led by Sen. John Danforth and administration economist Michael Boskin, back new consumption taxes to "encourage" saving. Venture capitalists and Dukakis economic adviser Lawrence Summers back targeted investment-tax credits. No one suggests cutting or simplifying other taxes first. Jerry Brown looks better every day.

—Rick Henderson

Homes on the Range

Thanks to a law passed in California in the late 1980s to restrict local zoning ordinances, manufactured-housing companies along the West Coast are taking the art of prefab architecture to new heights. Today some 1.1 million Californians live in manufactured homes that look as good as, or better than, the Joneses' conventional stick-built home across the street.

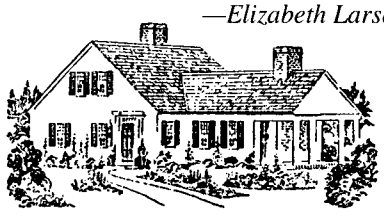
In 1989, the California legislature prohibited local governments from banning manufactured homes on any land in the state already zoned for single-family housing. Since then, manufactured-housing companies have worked hard to build a new public image of the prefabricated home: not a dingy, ramshackle trailer home but a spanking new two- or three-bedroom house with oak cabinets, rock fireplace, and cathedral ceilings.

With conventional homes and condominiums priced out of the reach of many California families, these upscale manufactured-housing companies are welcome newcomers to the housing market. A manufactured home can cost half as much as a conventional home. Nine percent of single-family homes in the state are now manufactured, and new manufactured-home owners provided the industry with $556 million in revenue in 1990.

Unlike trailer homes and the older prefab houses, the new manufactured homes make just one move—from the factory to the new owner's property, where assembly of the house is completed and the building is permanently affixed to a poured-concrete foundation.

From then on, the homes blend right in. Craig Fleming, vice president of Silvercrest Manufactured Housing Inc., told the *Los Angeles Times*: "When people come to our factories and see our models, they're pretty surprised and impressed."

—Elizabeth Larson



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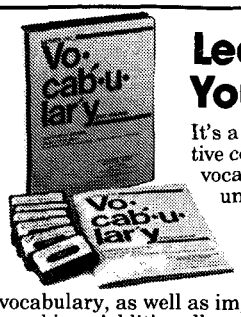

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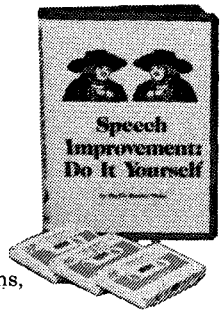

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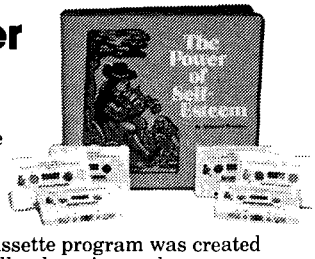
Learn the Power of Self-Esteem



Time after time, studies of groups of successful people have shown that high self-esteem is the one factor common to all those who have made a success of their lives and their relationships with others. This audio-cassette program was created to teach you how to achieve a fuller, happier, and more successful life.

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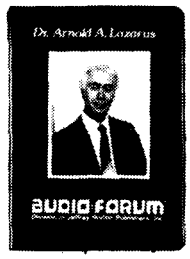

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BRICKBATS

In October, Los Angeles physician Gershon Hepner pleaded guilty to 25 felony fraud and theft charges, admitting to stealing up to $8 million through false insurance claims. Now Hepner receives state disability payments for the stress he says he suffered since getting caught.

Last year, the California Supreme Court upheld Proposition 140, a ballot initiative that limits the number of terms someone may serve in the state legislature and cuts the budget for the legislature by 38 percent. This March, the assembly committee that oversees the state judiciary retaliated by cutting the high court's budget by an equal percentage.

French Culture Minister Jack Lang recently named Sylvester Stallone an officer of the Order of Arts and Letters for his contribution to the cinema. This occurred, of course, before *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot* was released in Europe.

In Greenville, South Carolina, Al Palanza Jr. got a letter from the county department of social services addressed to his recently deceased brother. It read: "Your food stamps will be stopped effective March 1992 because we received notice that you passed away. May God bless you. You may reapply if there is a change in your circumstances."

George Peach, chief prosecutor for the city of St. Louis, has spent most of his 15 years in office cracking down on obscenity and prostitution. In March, Peach was arrested for solicitation. At first, he denied the charges, but he has now admitted his sins. He says, however, that he still plans to run for re-election later this year. Presumably, he wants to continue his campaign against perverts.

Last month, Brickbats reported that *The Oregonian* will no longer print Indian nicknames for sports teams. We have since learned that one of the teams affected by this move is the Chemawa Indian School in Salem, Oregon. The school's sports teams—the Braves—will no longer be referred to by their nickname in the state's most important paper.

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MISMANAGEMENT, ADULTERY and TAXES.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin have found that beef and cheese contain a cancer-fighting compound called conjugated linoleic acid. A quarter pound of ground chuck, for example, contains millions of times more CLA than it has mutagens.

On the other hand, alfalfa sprouts contain a potent natural toxin called canavanine. *Esquire* magazine reports that in a recent test to determine the effects on monkeys of a diet high in alfalfa sprouts, one-third of the animals developed autoimmune disorders and other significant abnormalities. Jeremy Rifkin probably isn't going to take this well.

In Dayton, Ohio, the U.S. Postal Service is on trial in an employment-discrimination suit. The Postal Service's attorneys, who are based in Philadelphia, had to file documents with the court. The papers had to get to the courthouse absolutely positively overnight, so the attorneys sent them by USPS Express Mail, which promises next-day delivery. You guessed it. The documents actually arrived 10 days later.

Elizabeth Vick has filed suit against the city of Mountain View, California, for damages she suffered while spending the day at a city park. The 52-year-old woman says that she came across a used needle and syringe while flying her kite. She picked up the needle and accidentally stuck herself in the hand. She feels the city is liable because it didn't keep the place cleaner.

Regular Brickbats readers know that Florida is obsessed with buttocks. From Palm Beach to Orlando, local officials have been trying to ban thong bikinis. The latest front in the Butt War is St. Augustine. After several all-night emergency meetings, the St. John's County Commission has passed a law forbidding people from exposing their buttocks. So there is no misunderstanding, the law contains a 136-word definition of *buttocks*.

—Charles Oliver

A Feast of Freedom

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Hors d'oeuvres

To whet your appetite, **Reflections** offers the provocative opinions of **Liberty**'s editors. A few selections from the menu for May:

Jane Shaw wonders why yuppy environmentalists have their snouts in the federal trough;

Karl Hess enucleates big lips, raw fish-eaters, and the attempt to force gays into ghettos;

Brian Doherty raps on rap music: he thinks it is *reactionary* but not corrupting;

Sheldon Richman defends the "odious authoritarian," Pat Buchanan.

Entrées

The main course is a variety of controversial and thoughtful essays. A few entrées from our current offering:

C.A. Arthur explains why Americans should make the Arkansan Bill Clinton President, not *despite* his various scandals, but *because* of them;

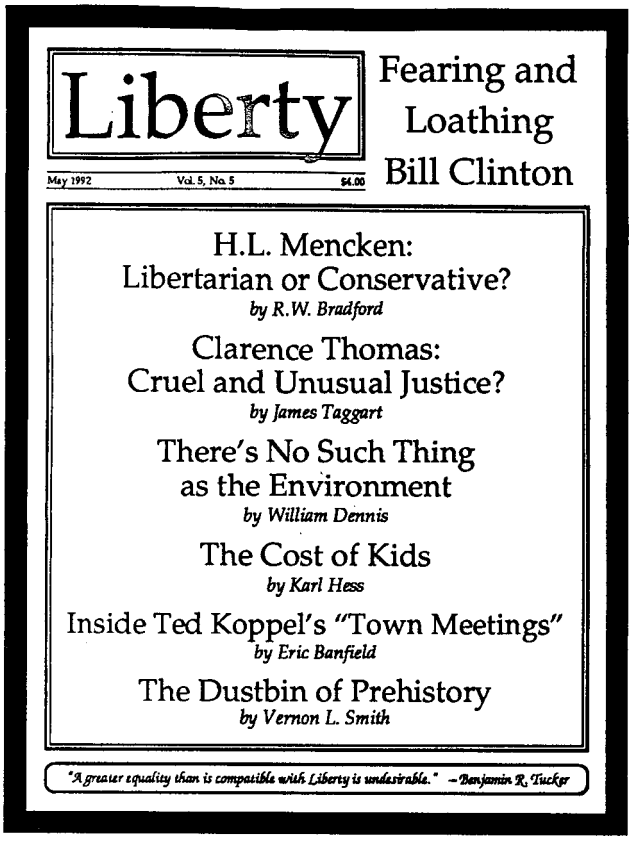
Gary Alexander celebrates the 200th Anniversary of America's most successful price-fixing cartel, the New York Stock Exchange;

Vernon L. Smith tells why our species has prevailed, and others have ended up in the dustbin of prehistory;

William Dennis explains that although there ain't no such thing as *the* environment, there are *human* environments, and they ought to include both wilderness and liberty;

Mark Tier tells what it's like to live in a society where there are no unions and no minimum wage laws.

Vojtech Cepl and *Ron Lipp* anticipate the coming divorce between the Czechs and Slovaks.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by Eric Banfield
The Dustbin of Prehistory
by Vernon L. Smith
"A greater equality than is compatible with Liberty is undesirable." —Benjamin R. Tucker

Potages

To accompany its main features, **Liberty** presents a variety of penetrating reviews. A few examples from our current issue:

R.W. Bradford sets the record straight on H.L. Mencken's politics;

David Horowitz, Robert Higgs, John Hospers, Karl Hess and *Steve Cox* evaluate F.A. Hayek's contributions to the cause of freedom;

Eric Banfield explains how the spontaneity of Ted Koppel's "Town Meetings" is faked;

Kyle Rothweiler draws the ominous parallels between animal sex and human mating rituals.

Desserts

To top off your feast and satisfy your intellectual sweet-tooth, **Liberty** offers:

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Inside Ayn Rand's Inner Circle

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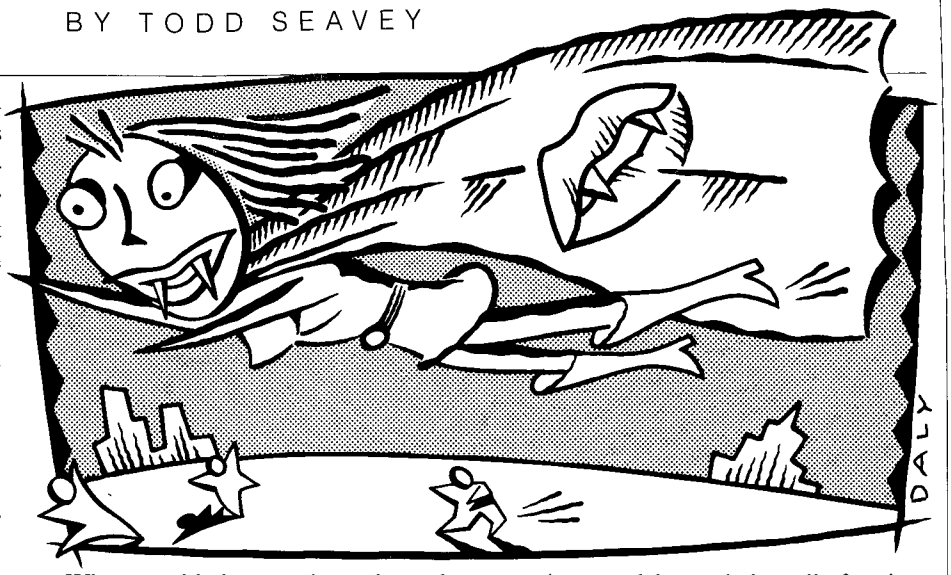
BISEXUAL VAMPIRE WOMEN

BY TODD SEAVEY



So I pay a weekend visit to Brown University, and Camille Paglia is giving a lecture. (She's the "post-feminist" whose book *Sexual Personae* irked feminists by suggesting that gender and art are rooted in nature rather than mere patriarchal social codes.) It turns out Paglia's not only against the intervention of the state in matters of sex, drugs, and economics but is actively "pro-pornography and pro-prostitution." ("Post-porn" performer Annie Sprinkle defended pornography and prostitution a few days later at Brown—in keeping with the politics-and-bisexual-women theme of my weekend—but for some reason she doesn't seem to anger the leftists.)

Naturally, I was delighted with Paglia, but I probably shouldn't have been surprised—and I don't just mean because Paglia praises capitalism within the first three pages of *Sexual Personae*. I should have expected great things from Paglia because she has so many enemies at Brown University. Brown has been functioning as a useful detector of greatness in this way at least since the anti-P. J. O'Rourke protest there in 1988.

Paglia's opposition included angry, sometimes hissing, feminists in the audience, whose jeers she in some sense deserved, tending as she did to shout at her opponents and call them brainwashed toadies. What she didn't deserve—and what was far stranger—were flyers from the International Socialist Organization and Teachers for a Democratic Culture that were distributed outside the lecture hall by students who called Paglia a token "voicebox for the right, like Dinesh D'Souza." One student suggested Paglia is simply one more tool of the Reagan-Bush establishment, bent on denying equal access to health care, education, and employment for women and people of color, which is interesting, since she spends all her time talking about art and literature.

What would the meeting where the conservative establishment plotted to unleash Paglia sound like? I wonder. Perhaps John Sununu was sitting at a White House staff meeting a year ago and said, "What we need is a bisexual literature professor who loves Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, and the Marquis de Sade, who compares herself to Madonna and a gay man in a woman's body, calls herself a 'vampire resurrected from the dead to take revenge' on academic feminism, deplores semiotics and French literary theory, praises our society's latent paganism, and calls on us to examine the cthonian nature of gender construction. Send a memo to Quayle—I think someone on his staff might fit the bill."

Actually, I think Paglia embodies two trends, neither of them Republican plots: the tendency of people who can't take either the right or the left seriously (like humorist Dave Barry) to end up as libertarians and the growing tendency of people to look to nature and biology, instead of ideology, to explain society. Examples of the latter trend include not only the book *Bionomics* and several works on the idea that ethics have evolved from instincts but also the films of David Cronenberg and David Lynch, both of whom take heat from feminists for their attempts to depict the brutal organic matrix at work beneath the veil of society. (And you thought those scenes of exploding heads and deformed babies were strictly there to horrify—shows what *you* know.)

In any case, I think it's valuable to have a libertarian among us who has opinions on cultural matters instead of just economics. Paglia gives one hope that diverse cultural threads, from the psychedelic '60s to conservatism to avant-garde art can be claimed by libertarians, that political libertarians can appeal to a broad cultural spectrum the way F. A. Hayek's work appeals to a broad philosophical spectrum.

On the down side, Paglia can be as nuts as Nietzsche and has some unsympathetic things to say about date-rape victims. And even libertarians aren't necessarily going to embrace her—look at the review *Sexual Personae* got in the December REASON, or worse, at the letter in the April issue that says no libertarian should be interested in reading *Sexual Personae* anyway.

Well, I'll just point out that she's getting more press coverage than, say, California's pollution-trading program or privatization in Sweden. Could it be that the public is more interested in art and sex than in property rights?

Todd Seavey is a writer in New York City.

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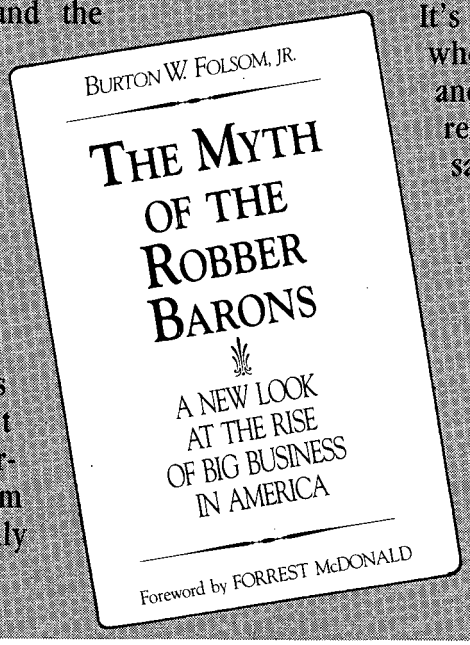
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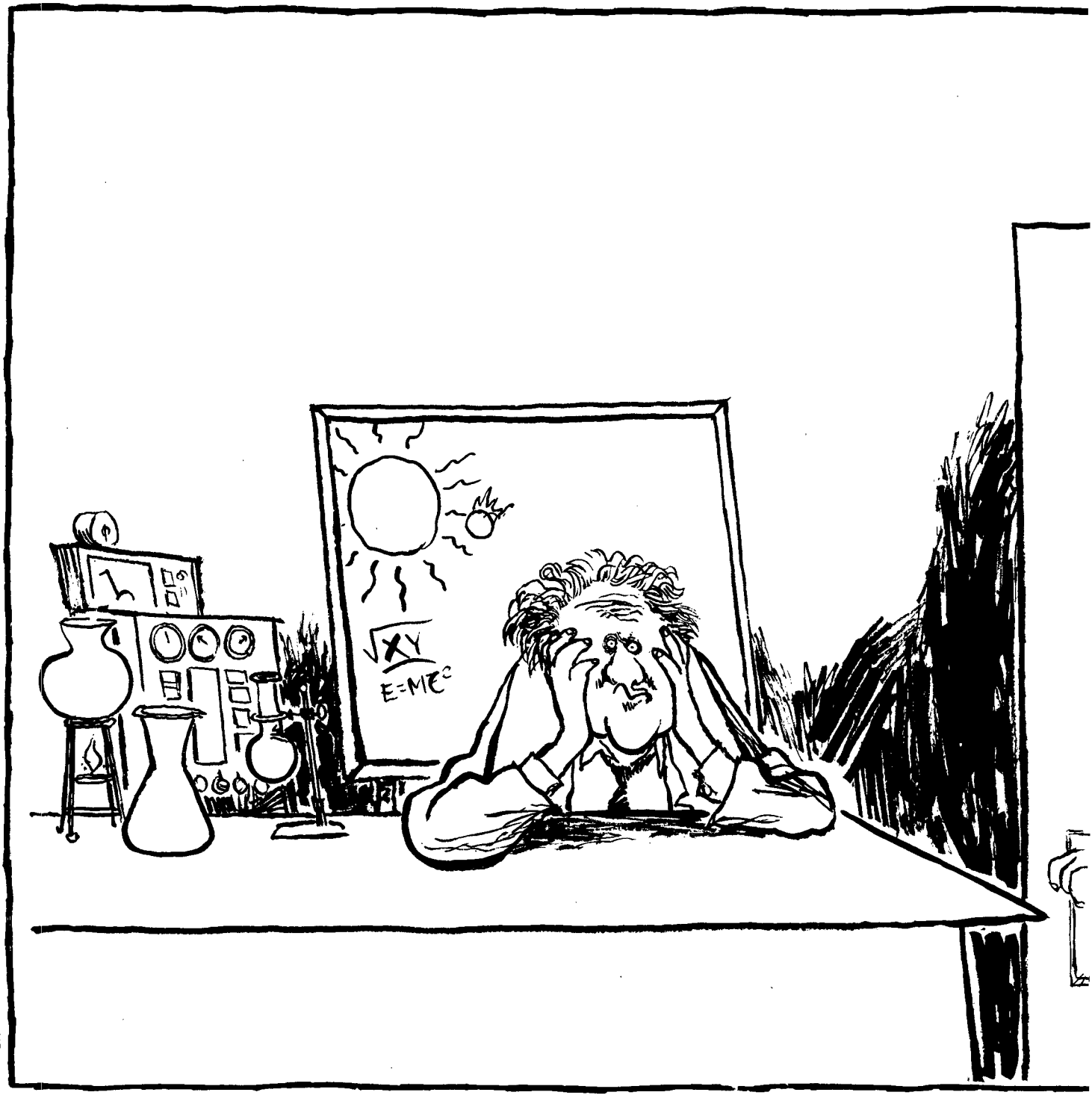

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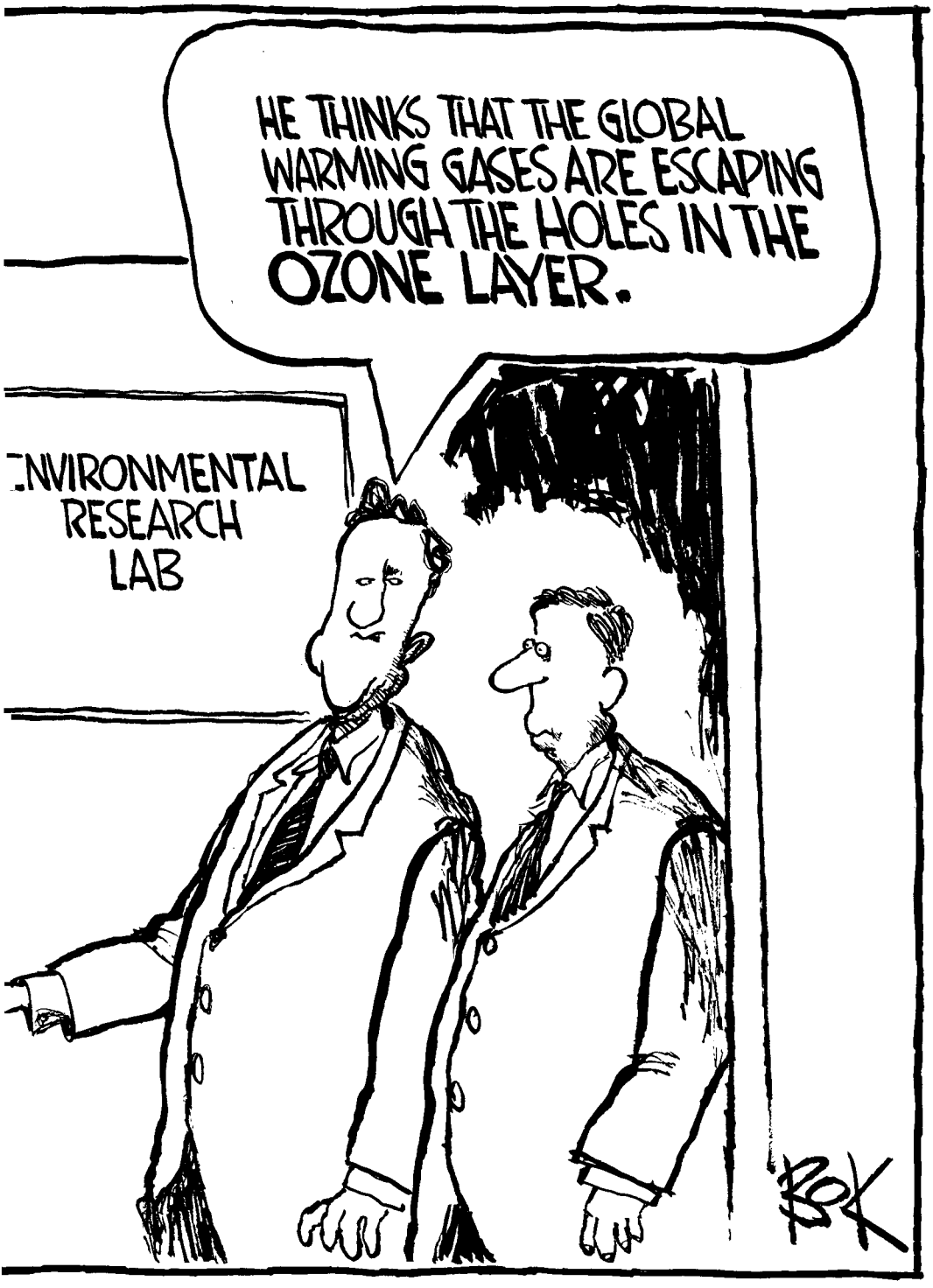
HE THINKS THAT THE GLOBAL WARMING GASES ARE ESCAPING THROUGH THE HOLES IN THE OZONE LAYER.
ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH LAB
BOK

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE SCARE

In early February, scientists with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration ominously warned that a full-blown "ozone hole" rivaling the one over Antarctica might open up over the United States during the spring, zapping Americans with damaging ultraviolet sunlight. *Time* showcased the story on the front cover of its February 17 issue, warning that "danger is shining through the sky....No longer is the threat just to our future; the

By Ronald Bailey

threat is here and now." Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) thundered, "We have to tell our children that they must redefine their relationship to the sky, and they must begin to think of the sky as a threatening part of their environment."

Spooked by NASA, the Senate hastily passed, 96 to 0, an amendment demanding that President Bush speed up the schedule for phasing out the chemicals implicated in ozone destruction. Stung by the vote, Bush changed the deadline for a complete ban on the refrigerants known as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) from the year 2000 to the end of 1995.

Although NASA did not acknowledge it, the "danger" of an ozone hole opening over the Northern Hemisphere had already passed less than a month after the putative crisis was announced. By late February, satellite data showed that levels of ozone-destroying chlorine monoxide had dropped significantly, and scientists could find no evidence of a developing ozone hole over the United States. One NASA atmospheric scientist told me that the agency "really jumped the gun," while another drily commented that "it was perhaps premature for NASA to say that something drastic was about to occur."

Why the rush? Why did NASA bureaucrats and scientists feel they needed to frighten the American public?

The NASA revelations were exquisitely timed to bolster the agency's budget request for its global climate change program, whose funding is slated to double by fiscal year 1993. "This is about money," Melvyn Shapiro, a meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, told *Insight* magazine. "If there were no dollars attached to this game, you'd see it played in a very different way." One NASA atmospheric scientist even wondered if it was only a coincidence that Gore's new book of apocalyptic environmentalism, *Earth in the Balance*, was published just days before NASA held its ozone press conference. After all, Gore chairs the Subcommittee on Science, Space, and Technology, which oversees NASA's budget.

And there was another reason for jumping the gun. Environmental activists and their sympathizers in Congress and the bureaucracy were anxious to push President Bush into attending the big United Nations "Earth Summit" in June. Gore likened the alleged ozone crisis to global warming and urged the president to sign the global climate change treaty that is the centerpiece of the Earth Summit.

By now everyone (94 percent of Americans, according to one poll) has heard that Earth's protective ozone shield is wearing thin and even has a hole in it over the South Pole. The looming ozone catastrophe purportedly will bring humanity withered crops, collapsing terrestrial and marine ecosystems, skin-cancer epidemics, and populations with seriously compromised immune systems. The culprits in this drama are a group of industrial chemicals purveyed by greedy corporations to pampered and spoiled consumers. Ozone depletion is the perfect ecological morality play.

In a morality play, unfortunately, there is no place for ambiguity. Yet the impact of CFCs on the ozone layer is a complex question that turns on murky evidence, tentative conclusions, conflicting interpretations, and changing predictions.

NASA'S OZONE REVELATIONS WERE EXQUISITELY TIMED TO BOLSTER THE AGENCY'S BUDGET REQUEST FOR ITS GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE PROGRAM, WHOSE FUNDING IS SLATED TO DOUBLE BY FISCAL YEAR 1993. "THIS IS ABOUT MONEY," SAID METEOROLOGIST

It's tempting to ignore these complications, abandon critical thinking, and join in the popular call for *drastic action now*. But we do so only in defiance of reality, for it turns out that ozone depletion is less a crisis than a nuisance, one that can and should be dealt with in a calm, deliberate way.

Ozone, which consists of three oxygen atoms, is produced when ultraviolet sunlight splits an oxygen molecule in two and the resulting single oxygen atoms combine with ordinary, two-atom oxygen molecules. Ozone in the stratosphere, some 12 to 40 kilometers above Earth's surface, is continuously produced and destroyed. This cycle of creation and destruction prevents energetic ultraviolet sunlight (in the 280-to-320-nanometer range) from reaching the surface, where it could damage the delicate proteins and DNA in organisms. Ozone is chiefly produced over the sunlight-drenched tropics, from which global air circulation transports it toward the poles. If all the ozone in the stratosphere were compressed to surface air pressures, it would make up a layer only one-eighth of an inch thick.

The ozone layer first caught the public's attention in the late 1960s, when some scientists claimed that the exhaust gases of a fleet of 500 Supersonic Transports (SSTs) would erode it.

Environmental activists leaped to oppose the SST program. Congress eventually killed the program, giving the emerging environmental movement its first major victory. Scientists later found that SSTs posed no great danger to the ozone layer.

The current ozone "crisis" began in 1974, when chemist Sherwood Rowland and his post-graduate fellow Mario Molina calculated that chlorofluorocarbons had the potential to deplete seriously the sheltering ozone layer. Rowland quipped to his wife, "The work is going well, but it looks like the end of the world."

CFCs are extremely stable, nontoxic compounds widely used as coolants in refrigerators and air conditioners. CFCs escape and waft into the stratosphere, where energetic ultraviolet light breaks them down into the highly reactive elements chlorine and bromine. One chlorine or bromine atom can dismember thousands of ozone molecules. Rowland and Molina predicted that increasing levels of CFCs could lead to a 7-to-13-percent decline in stratospheric ozone during the next 100 years.

In 1978, as the result of an environmentalist campaign, the United States became the first nation in the world to ban the use of CFCs as aerosol propellants. In the meantime, ozone depletion predictions fluctuated wildly as scientists calculated and recalculated what the effect of CFCs might be. In fact, by 1984, the National Academy of Sciences had concluded that total ozone might *increase* by 1 percent.

Then came the Antarctic "ozone hole." British scientists detected a 50-percent decline in ozone just when spring came to the frigid continent in late September and early October of 1984. Many environmentalists and some scientists believed that the ozone hole was a smoking gun that could be traced directly to CFCs. But chlorine floating free in the atmosphere simply could not destroy ozone fast enough to cause the hole. A mechanism was needed.

Scientists eventually focused on the thin and very cold ice clouds that float above Antarctica. These polar stratospheric clouds of water and nitrogen compounds form only in the months-long and exceedingly cold polar night. Every winter a strong and stable wind pattern called the polar vortex swirls around the outer margins of the Antarctic land mass. Because the air in the vortex is isolated from warmer air, it is chilled to below –80 degrees Celsius.

Nitrogen oxides, which inhibit chlorine chemistry, freeze and drop out of the stratosphere, leaving chlorine and bromine atoms and chlorine monoxides free to attack ozone when the returning sun peeks over the horizon at the beginning of the Antarctic spring in September and October. In effect, the clouds are miniature chemical laboratories where chlorine and bromine reactions powered by sunlight catalytically destroy large quantities of ozone. As summer approaches, the clouds dissipate and the hole is filled with newly produced ozone and ozone flowing down as usual from the tropics. UV levels return to normal.

In 1987, concern about the Antarctic ozone hole led 34 countries to reach an agreement in Montreal to cut world CFC production in half by the end of the century. In March 1988, the day after the U.S. Senate ratified the Montreal Protocol on Ozone, NASA's Ozone Trends Panel issued a report indicating that ozone levels over the Northern Hemisphere had been declining by 0.2 percent per year during the previous 17 years.

Alarmed, the governments of 93 nations agreed in 1990 to phase out the production of most CFCs, halons, and carbon tetrachloride by the end of the century. They also set up a $240-million fund, to which the industrialized nations must contribute, intended to help the developing world adopt new, non-CFC-based refrigeration technologies. The U.S. share will total $40 million to $60 million.

Since 1990, the rate of increase in CFCs in the atmosphere has begun to slacken, and atmospheric chlorine is expected to peak at a little over 4 parts per billion at the turn of the century. The chlorine level is expected to return to 2 parts per billion, the level at which the ozone hole first opened, after the middle of the next century.

TIMED TO BOLSTER THE AGENCY'S REQUEST FUNDING IS SLATED TO DOUBLE BY FISCAL YEAR MELVYN SHAPIRO.

Despite these projections, a sense of impending doom pervades discussions of the ozone layer. Alarmists warn that the damage has already been done, and public expectations about the impact of ozone depletion are tinged with panic. Accounts in the mainstream news media ignore several key

facts that would help to put the supposed hazards into perspective. For one thing, the ozone layer is not evenly distributed to begin with. Its depth is least over the equator, where UV light is strongest, and greatest over the poles, where UV light is weakest. There is generally twice as much ozone over the high latitudes as at the tropics.

A 5-percent decline in the ozone layer would increase UV exposure about as much as moving a mere 60 miles south—the distance from Palm Beach to Miami, from Seattle to Tacoma. Furthermore, UV light increases at higher elevations, so people who live in mile-high Denver receive much higher UV exposures than do citizens of Philadelphia, which is located at the same latitude. Yet few people factor the risk of UV exposure into their decisions about where to live. Furthermore, Goddard Space Flight Center scientist Arlen Krueger, who is in charge of the Total Ozone Mapping Spectrometer, points out that ozone levels over the United States fluctuate naturally by as much as 50 percent. These periodic wide swings in ozone have no apparent effect on people, plants, or animals.

"There is no question that terrestrial life is adapted to UV," says Alan Teramura, a professor of botany at the University of Maryland and probably the world's leading expert on the effects of UV on terrestrial plants. He adds, "Even at a 20-percent decline in ozone we are not going to burn up all the plants on the surface of the Earth or kill all of the people. We wouldn't see plants wilting or fruits dropping unripened from their vines."

What would occur would be "subtle shifts" among plants: Those less sensitive to UV would outcompete the more sensitive species. More UV would lead to a gradual shift in the plant communities we would see around us. The impact on plants, if any, of a 5-percent decline in ozone would be masked by the greater effects of other climate factors, such as drought, pests, and frosts.

Some crop varieties are sensitive to UV, so lower yields could result. For example, Teramura found a 25-percent reduction in yield after exposing one very sensitive variety of soybeans to a UV level corresponding to a 16-percent decrease in ozone. Apocalyptic environmentalists repeat this finding endlessly as evidence of the dire effects we can expect from a thinner ozone layer. But they fail to mention that Teramura also found several types of soybeans that actually boosted their yields under increased UV, while others were unaffected.

Teramura has discovered large variations in UV sensitivity among different types (cultivars) of soybeans, corn, rice, and wheat. He tested 100 cultivars, including 40 types of soybeans, and found that 41 were unaffected by or tolerant of UV. Teramura tested his plants at UV levels corresponding to 16-percent and 25-percent reductions in ozone—decreases that no responsible scientist predicts. Teramura's results mean that, in the unlikely event that a thinning ozone layer ever becomes a real problem, crop yields could be maintained by selecting UV-tolerant varieties. Famine would not result from reduced ozone.

This conclusion is bolstered by the fact that in Minnesota UV levels are half those of Georgia and Florida, yet corn and soybean yields in the South generally exceed those in the North. The U.S. breadbasket is not on the verge of being blasted out of existence by UV leaking through a newly porous ozone layer. In fact, corn, wheat, rice, and oats all grow in a wide variety of UV environments now.

Teramura's bottom line: "I would start getting concerned at a 10-percent decline in ozone." Concerned, but not panicked. And he means a sustained 10-percent reduction, not transient fluctuations.

So a small decline in the ozone layer poses no great problems for the world's ecosystems. But what about the Antarctic ozone hole that we hear so much about? Isn't UV frying the penguins and the phytoplankton, bringing the ecosystem of the Southern Hemisphere to the verge of collapse? Marine ecologist Susan Weiler testified in 1991 at a hearing held by Sen. Gore that scientists had measured phytoplankton growth-rate reductions of 6 percent to 12 percent around Antarctica.

Marine ecologist Osmond Holm-Hansen of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography gently dismisses Weiler as "more of a politician than a scientist." Since 1988, Holm-Hansen has been intensively studying the effects of UV on phytoplankton, the tiny marine plants at the base of Antarctica's food chain. He found that increased UV may reduce total phytoplankton growth in the full water column by 5 percent at most. He adds that even if there were reductions of 6 percent to 12 percent in phytoplankton growth rates, this would mean a 2-to-4-percent overall reduction in the course of a year, which is well within natural variations in the Antarctic ecosystem.

Holm-Hansen also points out that Antarctic phytoplankton naturally tolerate similar levels of UV during the Antarctic summer and that phytoplankton are able to adapt to higher UV levels. "Unlike the scare stories you hear some scientists spreading, the Antarctic ecosystem is absolutely not on the verge of collapsing due to increased ultraviolet light," he insists. Even oceanographer Raymond Smith, who reported the 6-to-12-percent growth-rate declines, acknowledges that "the whole ecosystem does not appear to be collapsing."

Ecological apocalyptics also predict that reduced global ozone will mean massive increases in skin-cancer rates. Most light-skinned people are painfully familiar with the damage that UV light can cause—namely, sunburns. The incidence of non-melanoma skin cancer is strongly correlated with exposure to UV light. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency predicts that every 1-percent reduction in the ozone layer will cause a 3-percent increase in non-melanoma skin cancers.

But Temple University dermatologist Dr. Frederick Urbach, a consultant to the U.N. panel on ozone depletion, says the EPA's extrapolations are not very reliable. "You can crunch numbers in a computer and get whatever result you want to come out," Urbach says. He notes that skin-cancer rates have been going up dramatically in recent decades but adds that "the increases are due to people spending more time outside, not more UV." Moreover, the death rate for non-melanoma skin

cancer is negligible, less than 1 percent. "It takes real talent for someone to die of non-melanoma skin cancer," Urbach says. "You basically have to ignore a hole in your skin for years."

The weak evidence that UV may slightly lower the body's immunological defenses (after all, sunburn damages the body's largest organ, the skin) has also been greatly exaggerated. Gore and environmentalist Paul Ehrlich even hint that increased UV may make the AIDS epidemic more virulent. By contrast, Johns Hopkins University dermatologist Dr. Warwick Morison says the evidence for UV immunosuppression in human beings is "very incomplete."

Apocalyptics are also fanning fears of UV-induced epidemics. But the United Nations Environmental Program says "it should be stressed that the activation of viruses by UV is unlikely to result in an increased rate of infection." In other words, no epidemics due to thinning ozone.

In any case, it's not even clear that global ozone is really declining. University of Virginia environmental scientist S. Fred Singer notes that extracting tiny trends from the data is fraught with difficulty because the "natural variability [in ozone levels] is hundreds of times larger than the alleged steady change." In the 1960s the ozone layer "thickened" by 5 percent over the United States. The "thinning" in the 1980s just about brings ozone down to earlier levels, which were not thought to be harmful at the time.

In March, meteorologist Dirk De Mure and his colleagues at the Belgian Meteorological Institute published a study showing that the instruments used to measure ozone have probably mistaken reductions in atmospheric sulfur dioxide (due to air-pollution controls) for declines in global ozone. The reduced sulfur dioxide, they wrote, "has induced a fictitious Dobson total ozone trend of –1.69% per decade." The researchers found that, once the sulfur-dioxide trends are taken into account, there appears to be a small upward trend in global ozone.

If ozone has declined globally, scientists should be able to measure an increase in ultraviolet light at the surface. Yet there is no evidence of increased UV reaching the surface in the Northern Hemisphere. In fact, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientist John Delouisi reports that the network of Robertson-Berger meters that measure UV showed "an average surface ultraviolet radiation trend of –8 percent from 1974 to 1985 using RB-meter data from eight stations located in mainland United States."

Furthermore, UV flux in the rural midlatitude Northern Hemisphere (the United States) has declined by between 5 percent and 18 percent during this century, according to NOAA scientist Shaw Liu. He attributes the lessened UV to an increase in clouds and low-level haze resulting from industrial activities. University of Virginia meteorologist Patrick Michaels points out that if we were somehow to eliminate the haze, "the increase in skin cancer would far outweigh anything caused by what we may have done to the midlatitude stratosphere."

Moreover, it's wrong to draw conclusions about what might happen to the stratosphere over the United States based on the Antarctic ozone hole. "It's a purely localized phenomenon," says Guy Brasseur at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. The polar vortex limits its size. Brasseur expects the hole to disappear when chlorine levels drop below 2 parts per billion in the next century.

Conditions are less conducive to ozone destruction at the North Pole than at the South Pole. In contrast to Antarctica, the Arctic polar vortex tends to break up before sunlight can reach it, owing to atmospheric turbulence caused by the more variable geography of the Northern Hemisphere. And the North Polar stratosphere warms up quickly in the spring, so whatever chlorine monoxide forms is broken down and bound up in nitrogen compounds that inhibit its ability to destroy ozone.

So why the furor over a possible ozone hole in the Northern Hemisphere earlier this year? The chief reason is that atmospheric scientists detected elevated levels (1.5 parts per billion) of ozone-destroying chlorine monoxide. Despite the crisis atmosphere generated by NASA's publicity in February, scientists had been predicting since last summer that ozone might decline substantially in 1992.

Although all the evidence is not yet in, the chlorine-monoxide peak in the Northern Hemisphere appears to be the result of the 20 million tons of sulfur blasted into the atmosphere during the June eruption of the Philippine volcano Mount Pinatubo. In the atmosphere, volcanic sulfur is transformed into sulfuric acid droplets, which act like polar stratospheric clouds by sequestering the nitrogen compounds that inhibit the formation of chlorine monoxide. Linwood Callis, a scientist in the Atmospheric Sciences Divison at NASA's Langley Research Center, found that after the Mexican El Chichon volcano erupted in the early 1980s, ozone was significantly reduced worldwide. David Hofmann, senior scientist in NOAA's Ozone and Aerosols Group, told *Insight*: "I couldn't understand why NASA didn't come out and say that this could be a very unusual year because of the volcanic eruptions, that maybe what we're seeing is something that we'll never see again."

Despite elevated levels of chlorine monoxide and the attendant NASA hype, scientists found no evidence of an ozone hole opening up over the Northern Hemisphere this past spring. A small Arctic ozone hole could develop during an exceptionally cold, still winter, but it would be a rare and transitory occurrence. A Northern Hemisphere ozone hole, if it ever occurred, would happen in February and early March, when people are generally indoors or are well covered and sunlight is weak.

While the current scientific consensus is that CFCs are responsible for the Antarctic ozone hole, some distinguished scientists still think that it may turn out to be a natural and transitory phenomenon. The University of Virginia's Singer points out that G. M. B. Dobson, the inventor of the machine that measures ozone, reported very low ozone values—only 150 Dobson units—over Halley Bay, Antarctica, in 1956 and 1957. (By contrast, in the 1960s and '70s, the level was more than 300 Dobson units.) Two French scientists re-

cently republished data showing pronounced ozone decreases, down to 120 Dobson units, during the Antarctic spring in 1958. These measurements were taken years before CFCs could have caused any such decline.

NOAA meteorologist Walter Komhyr links both Antarctic and global ozone depletion to sea-surface temperatures in the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. Analyzing data from the last 25 years, Komhyr and his colleagues found that when the eastern equatorial Pacific cooled between 1962 and 1975, global ozone increased. Conversely, when temperatures warmed between 1976 and 1988, ozone declined worldwide.

Warm sea-surface temperatures dampen the circulation patterns that replenish ozone supplies at the poles with the huge quantities of ozone produced in the tropics. Warm sea-surface temperatures also retard the winds that break up the circumpolar vortex at the beginning of the Antarctic spring. A stable vortex prevents stratospheric warming that would short-circuit the ozone-destroying chlorine chemistry, which can take place only at temperatures below –80 degrees Celsius. After Komhyr published these data, he says, a number of atmospheric chemists chewed him out because they thought his findings might hurt funding for their CFC projects.

If the Antarctic ozone hole may not be due solely to CFCs, what about global reductions in ozone levels? The U.N.'s 1991 *Scientific Assessment of the Stratospheric Ozone* acknowledges that "there is not a full accounting of the observed downward trends in global ozone." The panel nevertheless insists on attributing global ozone losses chiefly to chlorine and bromine reactions, apparently because they "are the only ones for which direct evidence exists." In other words, we'll blame CFCs because it's the only explanation we have right now.

As noted earlier, however, NOAA's Komhyr thinks that some of the decline in global ozone is caused by changes in atmosphere circulation. Since the mid-1970s, he explains, weaker tropical winds have failed to transport ozone-enriched air from the equator to the higher latitudes.

Callis, the NASA scientist, analyzes the destructive effects on ozone of highly energetic electrons, the sunspot cycle, volcanic eruptions, the dilution effect from the Antarctic ozone hole, and changing tropical wind patterns. "CFCs come in a very poor last as the cause for lower levels of global ozone," Callis says. He calculates that fully "73 percent of the global O_3 [ozone] declines between 1979 and 1985 are due to natural effects related to solar variability." He also points out that global ozone made "a significant recovery between 1985 and May of 1990." Since we passed the solar maximum in 1991, ozone levels will decline naturally until the buildup to the next solar maximum begins later in the decade.

Environmentalists often decry the 14 years supposedly lost to inaction after Rowland and Molina first made their predictions about CFCs and ozone. But it's not as if there was nothing to lose by imposing an immediate ban. Environmentalists tend to discount the real and substantial contribution to human well-being that CFCs have made.

"CFCS COME IN A VERY POOR LAST PLACE AS THE
SAYS NASA SCIENTIST LINWOOD CALLIS. HE CALCULATES
[OZONE] DECLINES BETWEEN 1979 AND 1985 ARE DUE TO

Cheap refrigeration made possible by CFCs has been a tremendous boon. For millennia people died because they could not prevent food from rotting or becoming contaminated with disease organisms. Cheap refrigeration permits fresh and healthy food to be transported by truck, train, and boat to markets thousands of miles from where it is grown and harvested. Primitive methods of long-term food preservation, such as salting and smoking, filled foods with large quantities of potent carcinogens. CFC-based refrigeration saved millions of lives and enabled billions of people to enjoy much better diets of fresh meats, fruits, and vegetables.

Environmentalists can now point to new substitutes for CFCs. But many are toxic and flammable, making them far more dangerous to handle. In addition, the substitutes cost three to five times more. The extra cost will delay the spread of desperately needed refrigeration to the developing world, where food spoilage is a huge problem. It is probably inevitable that many people will continue to go hungry because of the CFC ban.

Aside from the cost of a ban, governments and companies have had to contend with ambiguous data and shifting conclusions about the impact of CFCs on the ozone layer. How many

times have theories, put forth in good faith, been shown later to be wrong? In the 1972 Club of Rome report *The Limits to Growth*, a very distinguished group of scientists, including Jay Forrester and Dennis and Donella Meadows, warned humanity that we would run out of oil in only 20 years. Our government acted on that prediction, making energy conservation the "moral equivalent of war," and ended up wasting billions of dollars on subsidies for synthetic fuel programs.

Or consider the dire predictions of activists like Jeremy Rifkin, who warned that biotechnology would let deadly new microbes run amok and upset the balance of nature. Had we acted on such fears and banned biotechnology in the 1970s, humanity would have forgone the new miracle drugs and agricultural products that now promise to alleviate the suffering of the sick and the hunger of the poor. Today scientists agree that early concerns about the hazards of biotechnology were overblown, and the Bush administration recently moved to speed up approval of drugs produced through genetic manipulation.

There's ample reason to doubt similarly catastrophic warnings about CFCs and the ozone layer. It's instructive to recall that climate alarmists Stephen Schneider and Carl Sagan claimed for years that CFCs were particularly potent greenhouse gases, contributing as much as 25 percent to increased global temperatures. But they failed to take into account the first law of ecology: Everything is connected to everything else. Ozone, too, is a potent greenhouse gas, and so when CFCs destroy it the atmosphere tends to cool. According to NASA, ozone decreases largely offset predicted increases in global temperatures due to CFCs. "What had been thought was a major greenhouse gas turns out to be having a cooling effect," noted EPA Administrator William Reilly.

Nevertheless, despite a great deal of continuing scientific uncertainty, it appears that CFCs do contribute to the creation of the Antarctic ozone hole and perhaps to a tiny amount of global ozone depletion. If CFCs were allowed to build up in the atmosphere during the next century, ozone depletion might eventually entail significant costs. More ultraviolet light reaching the surface would require adaptation—switching to new crop varieties, for example—and it might boost the incidence of nonfatal skin cancer. In light of these costs, it makes sense to phase out the use of CFCs.

But ozone depletion is certainly not the "global emergency" that environmentalists like Friends of the Earth's Elizabeth Cook say it is. The normal processes of science and democratic decision making have proved adequate to correct what might have become a significant problem. In 1990 our national and international institutions hammered out an agreement to control CFCs, the Montreal Protocol, that takes the interests of all affected groups into account (though imperfectly). Calls to abandon a moderate course of action and push up the deadline for the CFC ban are based on exaggerated fears and unrealistic predictions. On the evidence so far, despite the lurid crisis mongering of radical environmentalists, waiting for more information on CFCs and ozone did not cause any great harm to people or to Earth's ecosystems, nor will it.

Radical environmentalists argue that the experience with ozone depletion should teach us to respond swiftly and dramatically to the threat of global warming. Rafe Pomerance of the World Resources Institute says the international negotiations over CFCs were merely the dress rehearsal for drastic reductions in carbon-dioxide emissions aimed at preventing global climate change. While replacing CFCs eventually will cost billions, the price tag for abating carbon dioxide could run as high as $600 billion *a year*, according to Maurice Strong, secretary-general of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. He adds that the industrial nations will have to provide $70 billion more in aid to developing countries each year to help them lower carbon-dioxide emissions.

The environmentalists are right to suggest that the example of ozone depletion is relevant to the debate over global warming. But the example indicates that we should be skeptical of environmental "crises." The relevant lesson is not, "He who hesitates is lost," but rather, "Look before you leap." ■

Contributing Editor Ronald Bailey, producer of the weekly PBS series TechnoPolitics, *is writing a book on apocalyptic environmentalism to be published by St. Martin's Press.*

"CAUSE FOR LOWER LEVELS OF GLOBAL OZONE,"
"THAT FULLY "73 PERCENT OF THE GLOBAL
NATURAL EFFECTS RELATED TO SOLAR VARIABILIY."

CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

ARMED WITH BUSINESS RHETORIC AND DUBIOUS "FACTS," THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND HAS BECOME THE MOST POTENT LOBBYIST FOR A RENEWED WELFARE STATE.

By John Hood

HENRY PAYNE

America's welfare state is under assault. Over the last 25 years, the federal, state, and local governments have spent hundreds of billions of dollars on a host of programs—ranging from giveaways, like Aid to Families with Dependent Children, to education and training services—to eradicate poverty. They failed. The public knows it. Spending on these programs continues to increase, but at lower rates.

And some governors, such as Michigan's John Engler, are taking the previously unthinkable step of dropping people from the welfare rolls altogether. Engler pushed 80,000 people off the dole, saving $240 million in funding for the state's general assistance program. Other governors are paring back and putting conditions on welfare spending and other social programs.

But never fear. The defenders of America's great experiment in social engineering, despite occasionally apoplectic public comments, have a plan to save the welfare state. It's called "preventive government." Instead of focusing on personal *entitlements* to public money, the idea is for policy makers to focus on *investment,* on spending dollars now to save public money in the future.

Republican Gov. Pete Wilson of California, for example, has made national headlines with a tough welfare-reform proposal—but he is among the strongest supporters of expanded early education and nutrition programs for poor children. On the campaign trail, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, the nominal head of the Democratic center, calls for a "people-based economics," in which government invests heavily in education and training programs to promote employment and economic growth.

Preventive government owes its trendiness not to policy innovation but to packaging. After a decade or more of Reaganism's political success, welfare-staters have learned their lesson. Talk about "investing in the future" instead of "waging war on poverty." Promise long-term budgetary savings rather than big-government spending. And don't forget the main beneficiaries of the touted investment programs—children and youth, hardly as easy to demonize as shiftless beggars or welfare queens.

The Washington-based Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is a progenitor and notably successful proponent of the preventive-government message. Not coincidentally, Clinton's wife, Hillary, chairs the CDF board of directors. With a flurry of publications, congressional testimony, and slick salesmanship, CDF has laid the groundwork for a massive expansion of government in the 1990s—into preschool education, day care, housing, health care. And while the intentions and values of like-minded (that is, left-minded) organizations must endure intensive scrutiny, CDF escapes it.

After all, the group exists solely to provide, as its mission statement intones, "a strong and effective voice for the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves." Who can be against that? Protected by its shield of piety from the slings and arrows of skepticism, CDF is advancing an agenda indistinguishable from the 1960s War on Poverty.

That's not surprising. Marian Wright Edelman, who founded CDF in 1973, had been a staff attorney at the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund in the 1960s while her husband, Peter, had been an adviser to Sen. Robert Kennedy. Her plan for CDF was to defend and expand the programs begun during the Johnson era—such as Head Start and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) nutritional supplement program—with an intensive Washington lobbying effort. From the start, what set CDF apart from other organizations pushing the same agenda was a focus on compiling and distributing facts and statistics; by the mid 1980s, CDF was publishing some 2,000 pages a year.

That changed the nature of the welfare debate. Until CDF hit its stride in the late 1970s and early 1980s, say several longtime congressional staffers, Capitol Hill debates on social policy often featured shrill moral sentiment or crude class warfare appeals. Even in the early 1980s, one Republican staff member says, "anecdotes pretty much drove policy." An advocate for a particular program would testify about how that program helped a certain child or group of children, and then proclaim that "if it can work here, it can work everywhere for everyone." But now, the staffer continues, social-policy debates exude "an air of pseudo-sophistication."

PROTECTED BY ITS SHIELD OF PIETY, CDF IS ADVANCING AN AGENDA INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM THE 1960S WAR ON POVERTY.

To a large extent, CDF and other liberal think tanks are trying to mimic the success of conservative, free-market think tanks in the early 1980s. During that golden age, facts and figures from the American Enterprise Institute helped determine the direction of the deregulation-minded Reagan Administration. The conservative Heritage Foundation showed how powerful it can be to arm policy makers with brief, digestible nuggets of data and wisdom. In the arena of intellectual debate, in which participants read editorial pages and policy journals and attend Capitol Hill conferences, free-marketeers seized the right side of a credibility gap. They had numbers and facts, while big-government boosters had mostly anecdotes and diatribes.

It was only a matter of time before the left caught on. They formed their own versions of Heritage and AEI. So far the Children's Defense Fund, as an early outpost of retaliation against Reaganite conservatism, has had the most success in

legitimizing a statistical read of American society that justifies more government social programs. For example, CDF's annual reports, variously called *A Children's Defense Budget* or *State of the Children,* have become a ready source of factoids for Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, and *The Washington Post*—not to mention congressional policy makers. "[Marian Wright] Edelman's effectiveness depends as much on her adroit use of statistics as on moral suasion," *Time* magazine stated in a fawning profile.

Perhaps CDF's most successful factoid touts the Head Start program: Every dollar spent on "quality preschool education" saves $4.75 in future economic, education, welfare, and crime costs. Virtually every governor's press secretary in the United States knows that one by heart. President Bush certainly believes it, having called for a record $600-million increase in the program this year. Head Start's long-term efficacy is taken for granted by journalists and legislators across the country.

As it turns out, CDF has done a masterful job of promoting this statistic, since it comes from only one study of one program in Ypsilanti, Michigan. The vast majority of Head Start studies (and there have been many) have focused on the immediate effects of the program on the performance of poor children in school. Only a few have dealt with long-term social impact, and only one project—the Perry Preschool Program in Ypsilanti—has ever been the subject of a full-fledged cost-benefit analysis, yielding the famous "$1.00 saves $4.75" equation.

It gets worse. The Perry program, plus a couple of other less-researched ones, constitute the bulk of evidence for the "success" of Head Start. But they aren't really Head Start programs at all.

"These intervention programs were conducted under ideal circumstances," writes Ron Haskins, a staff member of the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee, in an article for the *American Psychologist* that has been much circulated on the Hill. "[These programs] had skilled researchers, capable staffs with lots of training, ample budgets....It seems unwise to claim that the benefits produced by such exemplary programs would necessarily be produced by ordinary preschool programs conducted in communities across the United States."

Haskins notes that the Perry program had a very high rate of parental involvement, including regular staff visits to participating children's homes. In reality, only about 9 percent of Head Start parents volunteer even one day a week in the program, according to a national parent involvement study, and Head Start staff rarely visit homes.

A growing number of child-development researchers are stepping forward to decry the Head Start "investment" hype. A skeptical *Science* magazine article in 1990 quoted Russell Gersten of the University of Oregon as saying that early intervention research "is not a very intellectually rigorous field" and has been easily politicized, resulting in "mushy findings" such as the long-term effects of early-childhood education. In the same article, developmental psychologist Sandra Scarr of the University of Virginia says: "There is quite a mystique in our culture about the importance of early intervention," yet "there is no evidence [for it] whatever."

As early as 1969, independent research indicated that Head Start had failed in its primary mission: to inoculate preschool children against the ravages of poverty or neglect they might encounter later in life. Studies found that boosts in I.Q. and other measures quickly wore off by about the third grade. But these findings were ignored or dismissed by Head Start defenders, who claimed the research results merely proved the need for a broader program lasting throughout elementary grades. Even this defense ignores the relevant research.

In a recently released study, researcher J. S. Fuerst of Loyola University traced the performance of 684 Chicago kids who attended not only two years of preschool but also two to seven additional years during elementary school of what Fuerst calls "Head Start to the fourth power." While his initial study—published in 1974 when most of the students were ages 13 and under—found significant reading and math gains, his new study told a different story. Only 62 percent of the participating students graduated from high school, compared to the national average of about 80 percent. The graduation rate had improved relative to a poor-child control group, but nevertheless the long-term impact of the intensive Chicago program had been disappointing.

Fuerst himself contends that this only proves the need for special education programs lasting up to nine years—which shatters the notion that a small investment early heads off bigger costs down the road. It also begs an obvious question: Why not fix the school system itself, rather than devise new and expensive federal supplements to it?

Indeed, the Children's Defense Fund implicitly grants that Head Start's long-term benefits are exaggerated by proposing a broad slate of other programs directed toward "at-risk" children that last until adulthood. "The growth and change that occur in youngsters between the ages of 10 and 17," states one CDF publication, "are greater than in any other phase of life except infancy"—a statement that dulls the luster of the Head Start silver bullet.

And just as in the case of Head Start, many of the programs CDF touts for older children have virtually no cost-benefit evidence at all. CDF publications constantly fudge the difference between true cost-benefit studies and informal, invalid comparisons. For example, the *State of America's Children 1991* report supplies this factoid: *"We can choose to spend $850 for one year of compensatory education or $4,000 for the cost of a single repeated grade."*

That simple equation ignores an obvious question. How many children who don't get compensatory education (such as the federal Chapter 1 program, which provides special classes and tutoring for poor kids) will repeat a grade? Until you know that, you can't compare costs and benefits.

I asked CDF for quantification of this compensatory-educa-

tion factoid. A CDF staffer referred me to a 1990 report by the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families titled *Opportunities for Success.* In that report, there are precisely five "studies" listed to substantiate cost-benefit claims for compensatory education. Of these, only one is actually a study; while it estimates achievement success for participating students as well as the cost to society when students fail to graduate, it makes no direct connection between the two.

The second "study" is published testimony by five corporate CEOs who "refer to the Chapter 1 program as an investment," the abstract cheerfully reports. The third citation is a 1987 CDF report, which does not provide a cost-benefit study. The fourth is a digest of education statistics that merely provides the costs of compensatory education and of repeating a grade. And the fifth citation is a quote from a book by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, which starts as follows: "When compensatory education prevents one student's repeating a grade, we can provide compensatory education to five other students at no cost." That states the problem backwards. We want to know whether funding compensatory education prevents students from repeating a grade, not whether preventing students from repeating a grade can help fund compensatory education.

In fact, despite the supple, business-sounding rhetoric of preventive government, CDF and its allies really favor a big-spending, federally controlled and regulated War on Poverty. Edelman isn't subtle. "One of the most corrosive lies we face is the pervasive argument that 'nothing works,' the War on Poverty failed, social programs don't succeed," she wrote in a *Mother Jones* article last year. Much of CDF's so-called Children's Defense Budget is really standard liberalism and welfare statism: Increase spending on food stamps and AFDC; raise the minimum wage to $5.00 an hour; establish national health insurance; expand the federal role in funding education (while opposing parental choice of schools); and boost spending for public-owned and subsidized housing, and so on. Its 1991 report has a chapter called "Housing and Homelessness" that never mentions the word *regulation.* The child-care chapter argues for more of it, despite the inescapable tradeoff with cost and availability (CDF would solve that problem by, you guessed it, spending more federal money) and the developmental risks involved in placing young children in formal day-care centers.

CDF acts as if the last decade or more of research into these issues didn't happen. Robert Rector, a policy analyst at the Heritage Foundation, told me of one instance when he approached a CDF staff member after her presentation on the advantages of formal day care over home-based care. He asked her how she responded to the well-documented risks associated with cytomegalovirus, a virus children in day-care centers can contract and transmit to their pregnant mothers, inducing birth defects. "What's cytomegalovirus?" she replied.

CDF's use and misuse of government statistics and research findings would surprise no one familiar with the process of creating legislation on Capitol Hill. Testimony is routinely passed off as research. Unpublished papers are given the same weight as peer-reviewed papers (as in the environmental scare of the week). But the difference, again, between the way most organizations are viewed and the public image of CDF is that the latter cultivates an aura of earnest compassion for children—which, no doubt, Marian Wright Edelman and her staff do share.

In practice, however, their policy prescriptions form the core of basic liberalism, with a sheen of "penny wise, pound foolish" rhetoric to make traditional big government palatable. Their proposals actually favor certain constituencies of *adults*—day-care center operators, teachers' unions, housing-authority employees, and a legion of federal, state, and local employees whose livelihoods depend on continued and expanded federal spending.

CDF'S MISUSE OF STATISTICS SHOULD SURPRISE NO ONE FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCESS OF CREATING LEGISLATION.

No one doubts that the plight of America's children is serious, that single-parent families are ballooning, that raising children in an atmosphere of crime, drugs, and ignorance is difficult. But despite the claims of CDF and other devotees of preventive government, there is no silver bullet that government can fire to solve these problems. Even when certain "early intervention" programs prove successful, as the Perry Preschool Program did, there is no evidence to support the assumption that these unique, idiosyncratic programs can be replicated nationwide by a federal government that can't deliver the mail on time.

The issue has never been whether good nutrition, intellectual stimulation, and parent-education efforts are good things. The issue is whether the government can provide them more effectively and efficiently than extended families, philanthropy, charities, churches, and the private market for preschool care and education can. On that question, the preventive-government crowd, so eager to save big government from public skepticism and the budget ax, is silent.

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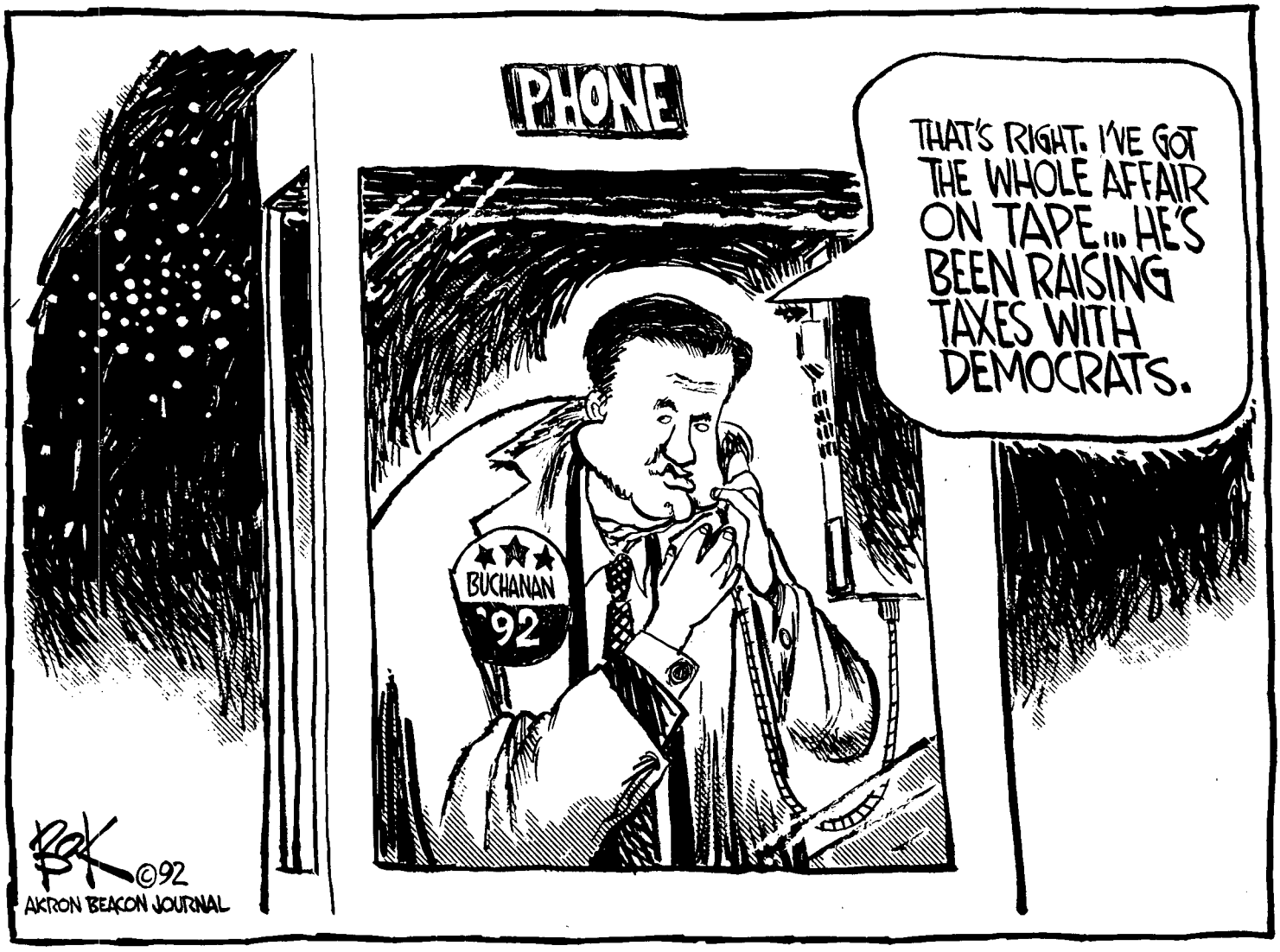
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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

WHY GEORGE BUSH IS IN DEEP DOO-DOO

By Loren E. Lomasky

CHIP BOK

Seventeen eighty-eight was a terribly unlucky year for George Bush. That's when a prior George captured the nascent United States' first presidential election. Had that event occurred one year earlier, its quadrennial repetition would now be over and the G.B. landslide might have rivaled that of G.W. But a year can be a long time in politics. The hero of Operation Desert Storm is now taking a battering in the opinion polls and may well be vulnerable to a Democratic challenge.

Whether the first Tuesday of November will indeed bring about a changing of the guard remains to be determined; I have no wish to add to the bulging pile of prognostication. It is, though, worth reflecting on how, against all odds, this has become a soured presidency. All the auspices were favorable for George Bush. The designated heir of the most popular American politician since Roosevelt was graced with, first, an inept Democratic opponent, then the chance to wage victorious war against a thug who looked as if he had been sent by central casting to play the heavy in a Hollywood B movie, and, as supreme benefaction, the final and irretrievable worldwide collapse of communism.

To be sure, much of this fell like a ripe plum into Bush's lap. More often than not he was the tardy follower of events rather than their statesmanlike manipulator. Still, the aura encircling a president is mostly an afterglow of the times during which he serves, and the Bush years have in many ways been good ones. I say that in spite of the undeniable economic woes consequent on the current recession. The economic dip midway through Reagan's first term was considerably steeper than the current episode, and it was unrelieved by any notable foreign triumphs. Nonetheless, there was no Reagan eclipse.

Why, then, the precipitous decline in George Bush's popularity ratings from 90-percent-plus heights to depths emboldening a coterie of undistinguished challengers?

It is not as if this administration has been negligent in attending to the signals of the opinion polls. There is nothing that it has minded quite so carefully. George Bush is a Texan whose two-step is Gallup and Roper, who seemingly never makes a decision without considering how it will play in the media. He is the antithesis of a Harry Truman or a Winston Churchill or a Margaret Thatcher, who would take and stick to a policy course although it led through the political wilderness. Nonetheless, and despite all inclinations to the contrary, Bush finds himself veering dangerously close to the thickets. The question is: Why?

One can point by way of partial explanation to any number of particular decisions that Bush has taken, most notoriously his acquiescence in 1990 to the very tax increase against which only 18 months earlier his lips had sonorously pledged unyielding opposition. And no doubt each of these decisions does account to some degree for the administration's current malaise. But that only pushes the riddle one level deeper. He took none of these shifts and swerves blindly; each aimed to buttress a corner of the Bush incumbency. Cumulatively, however, their effect has been the opposite, and that curious fact merits examination.

GEORGE BUSH IS A TEXAN WHOSE TWO-STEP IS GALLUP AND ROPER, WHO SEEMINGLY NEVER MAKES A DECISION WITHOUT CONSIDERING HOW IT WILL PLAY IN THE MEDIA.

I believe it a mistake to attribute the decline of George Bush's presidency to any one fatal misstep or even to a handful of critical decisions. Rather, I shall argue that what we observe if we step back to examine the Bush presidency in its entirety is an almost textbook case of how the whole can be decidedly less than the sum of the parts. On each specific occasion when Bush has endeavored to fine-tune the administration's engine, he has tinkered so as to secure maximal political mileage. It is possible to dispute endlessly the perspicacity of the individual moves. So let us grant that most or, for the sake of argument, all have been shrewdly judged.

The crucial point is that even if that were so, it does not follow that the totality of these individually optimal decisions is itself optimal. To put the matter another way, it can and often will be true that one's overall advantage is better pursued by forgoing some opportunities to snatch at a particular advantage.

An example might help clarify the general point. Suppose that you and I agree to meet at 7 p.m. for dinner. We arrange to do so for mutual benefit. That is, I agree to the date because of the benefits I see in it for me, and you do so to suit your own

interests. In the parlance of rational-decision theory, we are each acting as individual welfare maximizers.

Now suppose that at 6 p.m. another and better dining opportunity comes my way. My alternatives then become A) to keep the date I made with you or B) to duck out and take advantage of this new chance. If I want to do the morally right thing I will follow path A; to break promises, barring extreme extenuating conditions, is wrong. If, however, I am a consistent individual welfare maximizer I look instead only to my own self-interest.

As the problem has been set up, it would seem that the individual welfare-maximizing course is B. And indeed that would be so if the transaction were a one-shot affair. But social life is many-shot; how I act on this occasion will have consequences for my future opportunities to transact with others. Even in this simplified scenario these consequences are of two kinds: how my choice will affect your subsequent predictions about my behavior and how that choice affects my own character.

These are mutually augmenting. If I stand you up this time, you will place less confidence in my future promises. And if I allow myself discretion to duck out on this one occasion I thereby loosen, if ever so slightly, the psychological barriers against doing so again next time. If people's characters are even imperfectly open to public scrutiny, then this change in me will lead you to discount yet further the reliability of any future pledges I might make. That will be so even if I preface them with the exhortation "Read my lips!"

To present the contrast graphically, the difference between an individual who follows course A and one who follows course B is as if the former is wearing a sign saying "I KEEP MY PROMISES" and the latter wearing one saying "I KEEP MY PROMISES—WHEN AND ONLY WHEN IT SERVES MY INTERESTS TO DO SO." Plainly, someone identified as the second type will enjoy far fewer opportunities for mutually beneficial social interaction. The paradoxical-sounding upshot is that by resolutely resisting opportunities to secure one's own advantage one can thereby secure greater overall advantage.

Considerations of this kind are now familiar in the philosophical literature of practical reasoning. They are advanced with special insight and rigor in David Gauthier's *Morals by Agreement*. Although the model Gauthier develops is highly theoretical and quite technical in its details, it can readily be applied to the decision-making strategy of George Bush.

Bush's own words suggest the connection. The one characteristic that he ascribes to himself most often and with greatest apparent pride is prudence. Although it is not clear exactly what he means by this, or even that he has any exact meaning in mind, we can take his sense of the term to connote a disposition to take on each occasion the course that at that moment promises the greatest net advantage. Negatively, it means not being bound by the dead hand of the past. To someone with Bushian prudence, previous undertakings are infinitely malleable in the light of new considerations.

Prudence so construed is the opposite of acting on principle. One who has principles (and by that I mean of course someone who is generally moved to act in accordance with those principles rather than one who merely lends them lip service) is someone who is relatively inflexible to gusts of fashion or nuances in the popularity polls. So a prudent promise maker is also a prudent promise breaker; he will do either with equal alacrity as may seem expedient.

By way of contrast, a principled promise maker will take himself to be tightly bound by the word he has given. This need not be taken to the point of fanaticism. If you promised to join me for dinner at 7 but were in a multicar pileup at 6:30, your principles don't oblige you to drag your hemorrhaging body off to the restaurant. The principled promise maker is, however, someone who will bear substantial costs in order to keep his word—and he will do so precisely because it is his word.

All evidence indicates that George Bush is the most prudent but least principled man ever to occupy the White House. He finds it impossible to undertake genuine commitments. Instead, he invariably sets his sights on the most pleasant bauble within six inches of his nose.

Examples of this tendency are legion. He reversed his support of abortion rights and his criticisms of "voodoo economics" when the pursuit of higher office made it expedient to do so. Once the tax pledge that had garnered him New Hampshire and then the presidency had served its purpose, he heeded the call of Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.) et al. to do the "prudent and responsible" thing and raise rates. Taking a stand against racial quotas, he vetoed the Democrats' misnamed Civil Rights Act, but then he signed into law a substitute measure only cosmetically different.

Prior to Operation Desert Storm, he dubiously characterized Saddam Hussein as "worse than Hitler" yet for obscure political reasons let up the assault only hours before it would have swept Saddam from power. He then sedulously ignored the atrocities visited on Iraq's rebellious Kurds and Shiites—arguably the most unfortunate of those who have mistakenly ascribed to Bush a principled stance—until media depictions of the resultant carnage inspired him to a desultory "humanitarian" effort.

He could with a straight face tell an incredulous nation that Clarence Thomas was the best qualified candidate for an open Supreme Court seat, which is, curiously enough, an honest assertion for one who takes "best qualified" to mean "holding out the greatest short-term political advantage." Bush has spoken for free trade but now apes the popular Japan bashing of Rep. Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Pat Buchanan, going them one better by adding Lee Iacocca to his traveling sideshow.

Though evincing pride in being the premier spokesperson for the democratic free world, he has routinely displayed far greater empathy for tyrannies such as China and Syria than he has for democratic Japan and Israel. Note too that the Bush rhetoric is consistently vapid: The Thousand Points of Light cast no shadow, and his vaunted New World Order is

neither new, nor applied consistently across the world, nor in any sense an order.

The political consequences of Bushian prudence are now coming home to roost. Voters tend by and large to be inattentive. Elections are infrequent and the efficacy of an individual ballot is minuscule. So, aside from any pleasures inherent in politics as a spectator sport, it does not pay them to invest substantial resources of time and energy in scrutinizing the doings of political actors. What this means is that the fine points of platform and policy are largely lost on them. Their perceptions of candidates will tend to be drawn with a very broad brush. That does not mean that these perceptions are necessarily ill-formed. Sometimes, indeed, they can be substantially less distorted than those of the pundits whose views are taken through a political microscope.

I believe that the current popular perception of George Bush as an ineffectual lightweight is a product of the vague yet basically well-founded apprehension that he is a man who is committed to nothing other than his own re-election, someone whose pursuit of the expedient is unchecked by any deeply held beliefs, principles, or attitudes. Nor is this perception entirely new.

For the past decade, Bush has been running away from the detested "Wimp" label. He tried to put it behind him by "kicking butt" in the vice-presidential debate with Geraldine Ferraro and, seemingly, laid it finally to rest by his handling of the war in the Gulf. But now, albeit transformed, the tag reemerges. If a wimp is someone who will not stand up to the challenge of a bully, then George Bush is no wimp. But though he will stand up, he remains unable to stand for. One distrusts him not because he won't be brave in a fight but because there is no way of telling what he will take to be worth fighting for. He is, ultimately, a man lacking a center, and no legerdemain of Peggy Noonan and Roger Ailes can replace that missing core.

What is it that accounts for this missing dimension of George Bush? In the absence of close psychological examination, one can only speculate, but perhaps his political career prior to being elected president affords a clue. Except for a single term in Congress, Bush never won office in his own right prior to the presidential election of 1988 (and even then he played Elisha to Ronald Reagan's Elijah).

Rather, the offices he occupied were always appointive: ambassador to China, CIA director, Republican party chairman. Success in those capacities, and as vice president, involved adeptly facilitating the directives of others. To display a wit and will of his own in those settings would, indeed, have been a liability. Bush's capacity to internalize the requisites of sophisticated servility proved truly profound, and it landed him the nation's highest office.

ONE DISTRUSTS BUSH NOT BECAUSE HE WON'T BE BRAVE IN A FIGHT BUT BECAUSE THERE IS NO WAY OF TELLING WHAT HE WILL TAKE TO BE WORTH FIGHTING FOR.

Unfortunately, those traits that enabled him to capture the presidency aren't similarly conducive to its effective exercise. Thus, the abject and desperate attempts to bend to every quiver in the polls by, for example, taking a choreographed trip to the mall to buy socks.

By saying that Bush is a man without principles I do not mean to imply that he is altogether a bad person. Quite the reverse: genuine evil requires commitment to (evil) principles—witness Hitler, Pol Pot or, less monstrously, Ralph Nader. Besides, the evidence will allow no such imputation. By all accounts George Bush is warm and affectionate with friends and family, and he is personally loyal to an uncommonly high degree toward those with whom he does business. I do not mean to deny that these are genuine virtues.

But, when untempered by commitment to valid principles, they are insufficient. To wit, the dogged attempts to bolster a thoroughly repudiated Mikhail Gorbachev despite clear indications that the latter could do no more good for either the Soviet Union or the United States.

Coming from Raisa this was admirable; coming from the world's most powerful officeholder it was folly. What the failure of the Bush presidency demonstrates is that a myopic prudence is not enough, nor is even personal decency enough. Adherence to principles matters too, and that is the one lesson of the polls that George Bush will not or cannot learn.

Contributing Editor Loren E. Lomasky, a professor of philosophy at Bowling Green State University, is the author of Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community.

READ THE TAX REVOLT LIVES.

By Stephen Moore

OUR LIPS

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STEVE McBRIDE, INDEPENDENCE REPORTER

The most significant election result from Super Tuesday this year was not the primary returns for George Bush or Bill Clinton. Not by a long shot. The most important news was that Oklahoma voters overwhelmingly approved a little-noticed ballot initiative requiring a three-fourths vote of the legislature to enact any subsequent tax increase. This is the most restrictive antitax measure ever passed in any state.

The vote constituted a major victory for the underdog Oklahoma Taxpayers Union, which overcame fierce opposition and big dollars from virtually all of the power brokers of the state: the governor, the legislators, the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce, the unions, the education establishment, and the media. This may be the biggest win for state taxpayer groups since Proposition 13 was approved by Californians 14 years ago.

The tax rebellion is not brewing only in Oklahoma. In the latest two November elections, taxpayers have dumped nine tax-raising governors—Republicans and Democrats alike. Last year, nearly two-thirds of Oregon citizens voted in favor of a ballot initiative that is slashing property taxes by 40 percent over five years. In the fall, Michigan will vote on an initiative cutting property taxes by 30 percent. Gov. William Weld in Massachusetts has introduced legislation this year requiring a two-thirds vote of the legislature to enact any tax hike.

Nowhere is the antitax sentiment more evident than in Connecticut and New Jersey, where state lawmakers have been under siege from enraged armies of middle-class taxpayers. These two states have become showcases of the modern-day tax revolt in action.

At the center of the turmoil are the two states' self-described "progressive liberal" governors: Connecticut's Lowell P. Weicker and New Jersey's James Florio. When elected, Weicker and Florio were said to be the torchbearers for the left. Both men fashioned themselves as the populist alternatives to the greed and selfishness of the Reagan era. Both vowed to erase the errors of the 1980s and implement a program of reverse Reaganomics in their states. They would soak the rich and recapture the middle class with bigger but better government. The left watched with eager anticipation. No one then fathomed the extent to which tax-and-spend progressive populism would bomb.

When Lowell Weicker was a senator, David Stockman called him "the biggest spender to bother calling himself a Republican in this century." Weicker flaunted his contempt for the policies of Ronald Reagan and reveled in his self-appointed role as the Republican party's consummate anticonservative. On election night 1988, Republican National Committee staffers openly cheered when Weicker was unseated by the more conservative candidate, Democrat Joe Lieberman.

For lesser politicians, such an ignominious defeat would have proved fatal. But in November 1990, Weicker won a razor-thin victory in the contest for the state house by running as an anti-establishment, third-party candidate. In the last week of the election, as the race tightened, Weicker saved his candidacy by airing television ads with a popular message: no state income tax for Connecticut.

Once in office, Weicker abided by this pledge for nearly a month, roughly until the time of his first budget. That budget called for a 4.5-percent flat-rate income tax, combined with a reduction of the sales tax from 8 percent to 6 percent, as the only "fair" way to close a $1-billion budget shortfall inherited from former Gov. William O'Neill.

But proposing an income tax was one thing, getting it through the legislature quite another. Weicker vetoed three successive budgets and vowed to hold the state capital hostage to fiscal paralysis until the legislature sent him a budget containing his tax plan. In late August, the governor won by the slimmest of margins: a single vote in each chamber.

Almost immediately legislators realized they had made a catastrophic miscalculation of the intensity of public opposition to the income tax. In October, a crowd of 50,000-plus—the largest political gathering in the history of Connecticut—marched on the state capital to protest the Weicker tax hike.

A University of Connecticut survey found that the protesters were almost a perfect cross section of the people of the state. McDonald's burger flippers, housewives, grandparents, and factory workers protested alongside Wall Street traders. The Teamsters sent 25 buses full of truckers to the rally; the United Steel Workers came in a 200-truck caravan; and the United Food Distributors union contributed $10,000 to pay for the rally.

The protesters demonstrated their anger in a variety of ways. They brought wooden replicas of military tanks and aimed them at the Capitol; hanged Weicker in effigy; carried banners that read "DUMP WEICKER THE TAX HIKER" and "CUT GOVT FAT, START WITH LOWELL WEICKER"; shouted profanities at Weicker when he made a brief, ill-advised appearance; and erected a "wall of shame" with the names of every legislator who voted for the income tax. Many brought October pay stubs, pointing in anger at the $50 or $70 now withheld each pay period thanks to Weicker.

That night, Weicker escaped to the New London Opera House, where he had agreed to participate in a program by reciting the poem "Ode to the Working Man." When his limousine pulled up in front of the concert hall, a swirling mob of nearly 1,000 tax protesters greeted him. At the sight of Weicker, the crowd erupted, breaking through the police barricades and chasing their governor into the safety of the building. After the concert, Weicker again narrowly eluded the picketers by sneaking out the back exit. As Weicker was whisked away in his limousine, hundreds of his furious constituents chased him down the street. "It was like watching a scene from the French Revolution," observed Joe Markley, executive director of the Connecticut Taxpayers Committee.

Because of such public hostility, Weicker now fears that taxpayers pose a serious threat to his health and safety. Between

September and December of last year, the state spent more than $80,000 of the new income-tax revenue to provide the governor with extra bodyguards and police protection.

Weicker has vowed not to back down. In a speech at Gallaudet University a week after the antitax rally, he attacked the Connecticut voters as "apathetic Rip Van Winkles." He declared, "The 1980s brought selfishness to new heights. Today we're picking up the refuse of that philosophy." But the people of Connecticut don't want an income tax, period. They are as passionately against it as Weicker is for it.

Legislators who voted for the tax have been pummeled with complaints from their constituents, and many have already renounced their support for the idea. In December, the Connecticut legislature convened a special session and voted by a wide margin to repeal the Weicker taxes. Weicker, however, vetoed the repeal bill, and the legislature fell a handful of votes short on the override attempt.

For now, Weicker holds a winning hand. In his inimitable patrician style, he has insisted that even if every resident of the state were to sign a petition urging repeal—and taxpayer groups have come damned close—only one vote counts, and that's his. He will continue to veto a repeal bill.

As a long-term strategy, Weicker and his liberal co-conspirators in the legislature plan to shave off support for repeal by calling for "repair." One of the approaches favored by the Democrats is to raise the rates on the rich and lower them on low-income families. Tax protesters say they will have none of this.

"Weicker's repair is unacceptable," huffs Tom Scott, chairman of the Connecticut Taxpayers Committee and probably the most influential leader of the taxpayer movement. "It's like asking Dr. Frankenstein to perform plastic surgery on his monster."

Still, Weicker has recruited influential allies. The Connecticut media regularly trumpet his tax plan, arguing that it has brought the state's tax system out of the ice age. The state's largest newspaper, *The Hartford Courant*, displays growing impatience with the public's "mighty and mindless tirade" against the tax. And a *New York Times Magazine* cover article glorified Weicker's budget performance ("this is the price you pay for being right") and congratulated the governor for being "a man muscle-bound by morality."

Weicker's best ally, though, has been big business. Aetna, CIGNA, and United Technologies are among the dozens of influential corporations endorsing Weicker's tax hike. The Connecticut Business and Industry Association, the lobbying arm of the state's major corporations, has infuriated taxpayers by assuming the role of cheerleader for the Weicker budget with fraudulent claims about the economic benefits of an income tax. CBIA regularly runs radio advertisements reassuring listeners that Weicker's "tax reforms" will create new jobs for Connecticut and that the budget package contains "powerful tools for controlling future state spending." "Big business signed a pact with the devil," charges taxpayer leader Scott.

In their defense, the corporate groups note that Connecticut's tax system has always been skewed against business. Although it never had a personal income tax, the state imposed a 13.5-percent corporate income tax—by far the highest in the nation. Weicker bought the support of business groups for a personal income tax by promising to cut the corporate-tax rate to 11.5 percent.

IN THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS THAT THE INCOME 20,000 JOBS. THE STATE'S BUSINESS-BANKRUPTCY BUSINESS-BAROMETER INDEX IS NOW THE THIRD

It was a woefully bad deal. The budget pact has been anything but a boon to the state's business climate. In the first five months that the income tax was in effect, the state *lost* more than 20,000 jobs. Connecticut's business-bankruptcy rate has surged to an all-time high. Its overall business-barometer index is now the third worst in the nation.

Small business owners understand the economic effects of the income tax. A survey by the Connecticut chapter of the National Federation of Independent Businesses found 68 percent of the members oppose the income tax as a solution to the Connecticut budget crisis. "Our members flat out hate the idea," says Dan Kiley, president of the Connecticut NFIB. "It takes money out of their payrolls and it has caused a general erosion in consumer confidence."

Murray Gerber, president of Prototype & Plastic Mold Co., a $6-million-a-year firm employing 65 toolmakers, says the imposition of an income tax may be the last straw for him. He is looking to relocate in Virginia.

Gerber is scornful of the idea that the income tax will create jobs in Connecticut: "The income tax has not only slowed down the economy here," he says, "it will make a recovery im-

possible." Thanks to the economic contraction in the wake of the income tax, the state's tax receipts over the last several months are already crawling in at $175 million below projections. Weicker is discovering what fellow pledge breaker George Bush did last year: You can't reduce a budget deficit if the economy isn't growing.

Meanwhile, the taxpayer groups of Connecticut—literally dozens of them have sprouted since Weicker's election—are demanding unconditional surrender. And they brim with confidence that they will win. Tax activist Scott says that taxpayers have a simple but effective strategy: "Either the legislators vote for repeal this summer or the public will vote to repeal their political careers in November."

Anyone who believes this is an idle threat hasn't witnessed the recent political upheaval in New Jersey.

state. Roughly half of the money would be devoted to a school finance bill, and the other half would close a budget deficit inherited from former Gov. Tom Kean, a Republican. The centerpiece of the tax proposal was a soak-the-rich doubling of the state income-tax rates from 3.5 percent to 7 percent. The bill also raised the state sales tax from 6 percent to 7 percent.

Around the nation, the liberal establishment toasted Florio and his tax program. *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker called Florio's agenda "liberalism for the 1990s." Others described Florio as a "cutting edge Democrat." *The Washington Post* began to ask why, if Florio could overcome the tyranny of "no new taxes," congressional Democrats could not summon the courage to do the same.

The political calculus that lay behind the Florio tax plan was disarmingly simple: Tax the very rich, and pass out the goodies to the grateful poor and working class. It was precisely the kind of can't-miss redistributionist political game

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The tale of Jim Florio's meteoric fall from grace is even more remarkable than Weicker's—if only because Florio had so much farther to fall. During his decade-long service in the U.S. Congress, Florio was one of the glamour boys of the left. His voting record and his self-appointed role as Reagan basher earned him impeccable liberal credentials. His political stock soared.

Almost from day one of his 1989 gubernatorial campaign, Florio had the look of a winner. He spouted a slick populist message—promising to chop New Jersey's skyrocketing auto-insurance rates, reinvest in the public schools, clean up the beaches, and provide relief from high property taxes. Meanwhile, his politically inept Republican opponent, Jim Courter, spent most of the campaign flip-flopping on abortion.

Florio skillfully deflected the only real issue that might have wounded him—the "tax-and-spend liberal" label—by declaring repeatedly during the race, "I see no reason to raise taxes in New Jersey." This was reassurance enough for the voters. In November, Florio won in a cake walk, capturing two-thirds of the vote.

Clearly emboldened by the size of his victory, once in office Florio no longer saw any reason *not* to raise taxes. With the support of the Democrat-controlled legislature, within 100 days Florio had expertly rammed through a $2.8-billion tax package—at that time, the largest tax hike in the history of any plan outlined in Kevin Phillips's left-wing manifesto, *The Politics of Rich and Poor.*

But while the media fawned over the Florio taxes, the New Jersey middle class was erupting in rage. For weeks on end, radio talk show hosts spoke of nothing but the Florio betrayal—and their lines were jammed nonstop with calls from like-minded citizens. The outrage vented on these shows prompted two callers—John Budzash, a postal worker, and Pat Ralston, a real-estate agent who says, "Taxes were driving me out of my home"—to band together and create an antitax organization called Hands Across New Jersey. Within three weeks, the group had recruited more than 70,000 members, and within two months, it had gathered 800,000 signatures calling for a complete repeal of the taxes and a recall of Florio.

Trenton was soon under siege. In July 1990, Hands staged its first political rally. The event attracted a motorcade down Interstate 195 more than 10 miles long, with traffic so hopelessly congested that police were forced eventually to bar entry to the city. At overpasses on the interstate, spectators draped banners calling for Florio's impeachment. Amazingly, most of the protesters had voted for Florio just six months before.

Protesters of all stripes and colors hounded Florio everywhere he went in the summer and fall of 1990. In Camden,

fifth-graders booed him off the school stage. In Princeton, at a speech to defend his budget plan, the audience drowned out Florio by blowing duck calls at him—to signify his lame-duck status. In Trenton, target photos of Florio plastered urinals in the State House. And in Cherry Hill, a women's-club gathering pelted him with rolls of toilet paper. This wasn't the populist uprising Florio and his cronies had envisioned.

One feature of Florio's tax bill was a new 7-percent excise tax on the sale of new trucks. *The Trenton Times* found that after the imposition of the tax, truck sales dropped by 90 percent in the state. The story concluded: "The new levy on heavy trucks was a complete failure. Expected to raise $44 million each fiscal year, the tax effectively killed off the truck sales industry in the state." The first repudiation of the Florio program came in early November 1990, when the legislature repealed the truck tax by a unanimous vote.

Next, the voters determined to exact a political price at the polls, and the first politician within their grasp was U.S. Sen. Bill Bradley. Never mind that Bradley had nothing to do with the passage of the Florio taxes. His transgression in the eyes of voters was wearing the same party label as Florio. For many New Jerseyites, this was sin enough: Bradley came within a hair of surrendering his "safe seat" to little-known Republican Christine Whitman, whom he had outspent by almost 10 to 1.

Florio swallowed hard and declared that he had received the voters' message—"their anger was directed at me." But instead of retreating, Florio, a former boxer reared on the streets of New York, instinctively went on the offensive. He barnstormed the state educating the public about the "fairness" of his program. He continually declared that 80 percent of the new taxes fall on the shoulders of New Jersey's super rich.

Florio is never more comfortable than when preaching the new-left gospel of greed and envy. He pummels his audiences these days with a blizzard of statistics from Kevin Phillips and other redistributionists. "Bear with me while I throw a few numbers at you," declared Florio at a recent Teamsters gathering in Atlantic City. "Top four-tenths of 1 percent, 7 percent of all gross income in 1980, but up to 10.4 percent in 1989. That means their share went up by 48 percent," he declared triumphantly as his listeners' eyes glazed over. At such gatherings, Florio seems genuinely puzzled as to why the New Jersey working class doesn't get that his program is in their best interest.

Sandy McClure, a reporter with the *Trentonian* who has covered the Florio administration for the last two years, seems to have the simple answer. "Florio's problem is that he has proven to be a lousy salesman with an unsalable product," she writes.

Last November, voters finally had the chance to vent their rage at the tax hikers in the legislature who contributed directly to this economic mess. They annihilated Florio's Democratic machine. The majorities once enjoyed by the Democrats in both chambers have been converted into veto-proof two-thirds majorities for Republicans. Across the state, in every election from state senator to municipal dog catcher, more than half the incumbent Democrats had their political careers involuntarily aborted.

WITHIN 72 HOURS OF THEIR MOST OF WHOM HAD SPENT THE BETTER PART OF 18 TRASHING THE FLORIO TAXES, WERE NOW BACKTRACKING

This was the good news for tax-weary citizens. The bad news was that to rid themselves of the Florio Democrats the voters had to choose Republicans. Within 72 hours of their landmark victory, cowardly GOP politicians, most of whom had spent the better part of 18 months barnstorming throughout their districts trashing the Florio taxes, were backtracking from their repeal pledge. Once in the majority, the Republicans merely repealed the one-cent increase in the sales tax, eliminating only $600 million of the $2.8-billion tax increase. The hefty income-tax increases that have chased homeowners and businesses out of the state would remain intact.

The taxpayer groups in New Jersey are seething over the double cross. "We have been betrayed by the immeasurable egos of the Republicans who think they were elected on the basis of their character and charisma," bristles Pat Ralston of Hands. "We now know they are nothing more than political whores." Most of the Republican challengers received substantial donations from the teachers, state employee unions, and other constituencies with a financial incentive to preserve full funding of state programs. For such interest groups, the Republicans are proving to be outstanding investments.

Much more puzzling is why New Jersey business groups have joined the efforts to preserve Florio's taxing legacy. At recent state Senate hearings, James Coe, president of the 13,000-member New Jersey Association of Business and Industry,

predicted that a tax repeal would create "economic chaos in the state." (Apparently the association does not consider a 154-percent rise in business failures sufficiently chaotic to warrant change.) James Morford, vice president of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, admonished members of the legislature who would "pursue a scorched earth policy on the budget."

Legislators, business groups, the unions, teachers, and the media have now all banded together in a full-scale propaganda campaign to convince the public of the havoc that would be created by a "scorched earth budget policy." Each day the press is full of new doomsday budget scenarios: furloughs for 65,000 government workers, 40 kids crammed into a classroom, disruptions in police and fire service, closing down public libraries, and other horrors.

Such apocalyptic claims are preposterous. After eight years of Kean and two years of Florio, New Jersey has the most bloated state budget in America. This is a state whose budget soared from $5.2 billion to $12.6 billion in just the last eight years. This is a state that spends $9,400 per student in the public schools—almost double the national average. This is a state with 600 school districts and more nonteachers on the public-education payroll than virtually any other state.

This is a state in which government employment mushroomed by 30 percent in the 1980s, while the population grew by only 6 percent. This is a state where the chairman of something called the Board of Regulatory Commissioners takes home a $95,000 government salary, the director of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority makes $92,500, and the New Jersey Lottery Commissioner collects $82,500. And the scary thing is that there are literally hundreds of other such boards, commissions, and authorities with patronage jobs that pay salaries three to four times the state's median income. Is it really any surprise that New Jersey has a tax revolt going on among the working stiffs who pay the tab for this gravy train?

Ironically, the biggest winner in the Republican flip-flop on taxes has been Florio. "Florio's strategy," admits one of the governor's aides, "is to give the Republicans just enough rope to hang themselves." It would seem that already they have put the rope around their necks. Taxpayers now resent the Benedict Arnolds in the GOP as much as they do Florio.

But the Republican betrayal has only energized taxpayer groups. Aside from disposing of Florio in 1993—his approval ratings are still stuck in the mid 20s—they say they will not repeat the mistake they made in November and entrust reform to elected officials. Their latest efforts are directed toward amending the state constitution to allow ballot initiatives. This would enable citizens to bypass the legislature and enact significant tax relief unilaterally—as in California, Oklahoma, and Oregon.

But in both Connecticut and New Jersey, the nagging question remains: Can the taxpayer group succeed against the forces of Weicker, Florio, the media, big business, and the brigades of other well-funded special-interest groups dedicated to preserving the status quo? Or are the taxpayer groups, as their critics contend, merely a constituency of unorganized "mindless masses" lacking the requisite clout and savvy to serve as a force for fundamental change of the political culture?

In truth, it is too early to tell.

But in other states, lawmakers have observed the political wreckage in Connecticut and New Jersey and seem to have finally taken hold of the antitax message. This year, despite record state budget deficits, only four states—Florida, Maryland, New York, and Washington—are considering major tax increases. All the other states will eliminate the red ink through spending reductions.

Consider Florida. When Democratic Gov. Lawton Chiles recommended a $1.7-billion tax hike this year, his popularity plummeted and the legislators of his own party balked. *The Wall Street Journal* explained the lawmakers' cold feet this way: "With an eye to what happened in New Jersey, none wish to commit political suicide."

Indeed, the only politicians who seem to be ignoring the fury of the antitax movement in America today are George Bush and the Democratic leaders of Congress. Along with Florio and Weicker, they may be the next political casualties of the great tax revolt of the 1990s.

Stephen Moore is director of fiscal policy studies at the Cato Institute.

LANDMARK VICTORY, COWARDLY REPUBLICAN POLITICIANS, MONTHS BARNSTORMING THROUGHOUT THEIR DISTRICTS FROM THEIR REPEAL PLEDGE.

SEXUAL FANTASIES

BY CHARLES OLIVER

Will watching *Debbie Does the Devil in Dallas* turn a man into a rapist? Can viewing *Buttman Goes to Rio* turn a man into a psychosexual serial killer? Or can watching *New Wave Hookers* turn a man into a child molester?

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) thinks these things are possible. So he has introduced a bill, the Pornography Victims' Compensation Act, that will allow women who have been sexually assaulted to sue the producers, distributors, exhibitors, and sellers of sexually explicit materials if they can prove that the defendant's book or movie "caused" the assault. A publisher or video store can be sued even if the alleged rapist or child abuser has never been convicted of a crime in a criminal trial.

McConnell is generally considered a conservative, and he claims his bill has conservative aims: protecting women and children and fighting crime. But in his zeal to fight smut, McConnell has sacrificed his conservative principles.

McConnell argues that his bill passes constitutional muster because it targets only legally obscene material, which the Supreme Court has consistently ruled is not protected by the First Amendment. But McConnell seems to differ with the Court's reasoning for exempting obscenity from protection under the First Amendment.

Obscenity, says the Court, does not convey ideas. Therefore, it is politically worthless and not constitutionally protected. But McConnell's bill is based on the notion that pornography *does* convey ideas: the idea that it is fun to rape women or to molest children.

So what does distinguish obscenity from protected speech? In a Senate speech on the bill, McConnell said that obscenity should not be protected because "pornography is a business, not a belief. Its chief motivation is profits, not principles." The same could be said of Hollywood movies, most novels, and many magazines.

McConnell's bill is, in fact, just another step in a movement to hold individuals and businesses responsible for things they did not do. Conservatives have railed against the loosening of liability standards, and McConnell himself has sponsored legislation that would curb frivolous lawsuits. So how does he square his pornography bill with his stand on tort reform? Michael Kinsley asked him just this question on *Crossfire*. "My amendment—my particular bill I think could be styled, if you can't beat them, join them," said McConnell.

McConnell insisted on that show that rape victims will have to meet strict standards of proof to win their suits: "It will be tough to make one of these cases. You'll have to show to the jury, prove to the jury that the material involved, a virtual how-to manual many of these are, was a substantial cause of the action."

But the very tort system that McConnell has criticized suggests that making such a case might be very easy. As Peter Huber and others have pointed out, courts increasingly have allowed zealots and charlatans to testify as expert witnesses in product liability suits. (Among the Bush administration's tort-reform proposals, backed by McConnell, are measures to restrict expert testimony.) Asked to determine if a particular product caused a plaintiff's injury, jurors often have no way to distinguish between good science and bad science, no way to figure out what real experts would consider proof of causation. So jurors often wind up thinking that correlation means causation. If a number of people have been exposed to the product and have developed similar injuries, then the product must be the cause.

The idea that correlation proves causation is scientific nonsense, but juries buy it every day, and apparently McConnell does as well. He has noted that some studies show that a high percentage of sex offenders regularly use violent porn. And he has stated his belief that the rising rape rates seen in recent years may be the result of a society increasingly saturated with sexual images.

But most psychologists who study human aggression say that while tests show that exposure to violent films (not just violent porn) can temporarily increase hostility in test subjects, there is nothing to show that real-world behavior is influenced by violent films. And even if there is a correlation between men using pornography and committing rape, that does not prove causation.

The 1986 Meese Commission concluded that there is a link between violent porn and rape, but Frederick Schauer, one of the commissioners who most strongly advocated this theory, admitted to reporters Philip Nobile and Eric Nadler, "It may be that some other factor, some sexual or emotional imbalance, for example, might produce excess use of pornographic materials as well as a tendency to commit sexual offenses."

The idea that rising rape rates are caused by the increased availability of erotic materials is called into question by statistics that McConnell himself often cites. In a statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee, McConnell noted that the U.S. rape rate is "4 times that in Germany, 8 times France's, and 20 times Japan's."

But Japanese salarymen make their nightly train rides home from work more enjoyable by reading comic books that are filled with very violent and very explicit depictions of rape. Sexually explicit material is at least as easily available in Germany as in the United States, and the mainstream of German pornography is much kinkier than the American variety. Finally, France's top-rated pay television service, Canal Plus, regularly shows unedited adult films. If pornography causes

rape, why do these countries have far lower rates of rape?

But a true conservative would ask whether it even makes sense to say that a book or movie "causes" a person to do anything. Conservatives like to talk a lot about preserving something called our Judeo-Christian heritage. And an important part of that heritage is the notion of free will: the idea that people choose to do good or evil.

Free will is also central to the practice of punishing people for crimes they commit. After all, it would be unjust to punish someone for a crime he could not help committing. The idea of personal responsibility is one of the longest-standing parts of our system of law, but McConnell would throw it out the window. That's hardly conservative.

Indeed, conservatives have typically railed against liberals who believe that judges should give lighter sentences to criminals who grew up in poverty or who were abused as children. Conservatives argued that millions of people have grown up poor or abused and have not become criminals and that anyone who commits a crime chooses to do so. Similarly, most of the Americans who rented more than 410 million adult videos last year have not committed and will never commit a sexual crime.

And despite McConnell's stated outrage over the fact that only 29 percent of rapists are sentenced to a year or more behind bars, his bill does nothing to ensure that rapists will spend more time in jail. Indeed, some feminists have complained that the bill will do more harm than good because it will lull lawmakers into thinking they have done something about sexual crimes by voting for it when they have really done nothing at all.

If passed, the bill could actually cause more rapists to serve even less time in jail. If a book or movie "causes" someone to commit a sexual crime, that implicitly makes him less responsible. After we codify this notion, how long will it be before criminals start demanding lenient sentences because they read the wrong book or saw the wrong movie and couldn't help themselves?

This isn't as outrageous as it might

In his zeal to fight smut, Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has sacrificed his conservative principles.

sound. Consider the case of Ted Bundy. Bundy was, of course, the man who killed dozens of women in the 1970s. His confession, just before his execution, to antipornography activist James Dobson that pornography caused him to commit his crimes spurred on the antipornography movement and inspired McConnell's bill. (The bill is, in fact, informally called the Bundy Bill.) McConnell and other antipornography activists took Bundy's confession at face value.

But those more familiar with Bundy were more skeptical. To them, it seemed like a last-minute attempt to get his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment. Bundy's lawyer, James Coleman, told *Playboy* that the confession "was vintage Bundy. It was Bundy the actor."

In the last years of his life, Bundy had come to realize that his only chance to avoid execution was to prove his incompetency—that he was too irrational to assist at his defense in his murder trials. To that end, he talked at length with psychiatrist Dorothy Lewis. Significantly, in all of those conversations, according to journalist Philip Nobile, Bundy never cited pornography as a cause of his crime. Indeed, Nobile notes that, based upon interviews with family and friends of Bundy, Lewis found that his violent behavior manifested itself almost from infancy and that it may have been the result of being abused himself or witnessing a close family member being abused.

Actually, Bundy's story changed a number of times, depending upon whom he was talking to and what he was trying to accomplish. In his initial conversation with police, Bundy mentioned alcohol and cheerleader magazines—not violent or even hard-core pornography.

Two years later, Bundy began collaborating on a biography with Stephen G. Michaud and Hugh Aynesworth. Bundy was at the time appealing his convictions and careful to talk about the killer in the third person. He mentioned that the murderer did search out violent porn, but he never posited a causal link.

Michaud told Nobile, "Pornography came out in the course of discussing a lot of things that concerned him—alcohol, genetic flaws, his confused thinking. But it's significant to me that when Bundy was arrested, his car was filled with cheerleader booklets—with lots of pictures of cute and bouncy cheerleaders—meant for schoolgirls....If we are to believe Dobson and the antipornographers, Bundy's car should have been full of the most vicious, wild porno on earth."

Ironically, conservative Republicans are using Ted Bundy's rationalizations for his crimes as the basis for a sweeping expansion of government powers. As of press time McConnell was reportedly just one vote short of getting his bill out of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The fate of the bill ultimately rests with liberal Democrats who must decide which of their constituencies to placate: the feminists who support the bill or the First Amendment defenders who oppose it. Meanwhile, conservatives have rushed to embrace the bill—even though it restricts commerce, expands liability, and excuses rapists, child molesters, and serial killers, partially at least, for the crimes they commit. The humor of this situation must give Ted Bundy some relief from the tortures of whatever hell he's confined in.

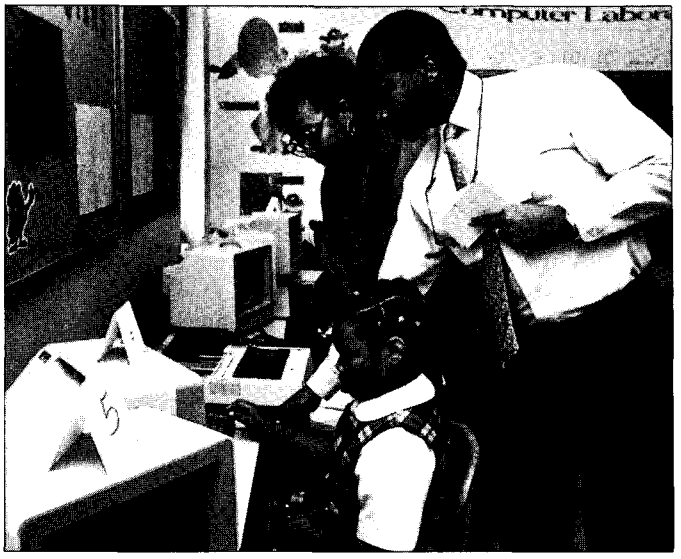
Charles Oliver is assistant editor of REASON.

AL IN WONDERLAND

BY ALAN REYNOLDS

All recent efforts to thwart choice in education are based on a fallacy and an insult. The fallacy is that looking at existing private schools tells us what private schools would look like if they were not hampered by unfair competition from state-subsidized schools. The insult is that parents cannot be expected to make educational choices that are in their children's best interest.

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, is probably the most thoughtful critic of school choice. Yet his columns on the subject, published in *The New York Times*, reveal these two basic misunderstandings. Shanker seems to assume that competition will not result in new entry by innovative entrepreneurs or even the takeover of unsuccessful institutions by new managers. He repeatedly argues that the number of excellent schools must remain fixed and small.



Choice in education would allow more parents to select private alternatives like the Monroe Saunders School in Baltimore.

"Given the poor results in private as well as public schools," he writes, "it's hard to see how getting the two sectors to compete will improve the education students are getting."

To back up this claim, Shanker cites the results of a standardized math test on which 12th-graders in private schools (unlike younger students) do not perform much better than their public-school counterparts—if you adjust for the fact that those in private schools take more advanced math courses, such as calculus. Yet one advantage of private schools is that they offer or even require such tougher courses. Moreover, a frightening proportion of kids in inner-city schools—often 40 percent or more—never make it to the 12th grade. So testing graduating seniors amounts to comparing the top survivors of the public-school system with the average of the private system, in which nearly everyone graduates.

Nor does Shanker appreciate the ways in which dynamic competition caters to diverse needs. For example, he argues that private schools would have no incentive in a free market to serve (as the public-school system clearly does not) students who require remedial education or have discipline problems. Shanker's claim that private schools refuse to deal with disciplinary problems seems particularly strange, since this is precisely why many parents pull their kids out of public "blackboard jungles" and put them in Catholic or military schools. And many private institutions have arisen to help children who suffer from dyslexia, or loss of sight or hearing.

Similarly, Shanker claims that private schools will "cream" the best students from affluent families, leaving problem kids from low-income neighborhoods to the public schools. "Excellent schools (and the supply is limited) are very selective; mediocre and lousy ones are not," Shanker writes. "But whatever their quality, it is the [private] schools that do the choosing....Private schools are not interested in taking poor and minority...students who are in big trouble in their current schools....They prefer kids who are doing well in school."

This is not only wrong but backwards. Intact families with decent incomes already have some degree of choice, since they can afford either to send their children to private schools or to move to suburbs with relatively safe and effective public schools. Low-income and single parents have the least choice under the current system, since they often have no option but to send their children to unacceptable, even dangerous, urban schools. Under any system that allowed such disadvantaged students to take their subsidy to a school of their choice, new local schools would arise to meet that demand, more-distant schools would offer transportation, and schools that lost many students would have to be restructured or closed.

Suppose we were talking about cars instead of schools. To follow Shanker's line of argument, we would have to believe that the poor quality of Plymouth Horizons, Ford Pintos, and Chevrolet Vegas in the 1970s meant that quality could not be improved by opening the market to Honda, Mazda, and Mitsubishi. According to Shanker's reasoning, competition would just result in Cadillac and Lincoln dealers picking their customers from a long waiting list, with nobody trying to sell either better or cheaper cars.

When not resorting to the mistaken assumption that competition can only take place among existing schools run by existing administrators, Shanker instead resorts to the professional educator's snobbery. In this view, parents—particularly those with low incomes—are simply too ignorant, racist, lazy, or apa-

TOM JEMSKI

thetic to make intelligent choices.

"There is little reason to believe that choice is going to get most parents to select schools with rigorous standards instead of schools that have easier programs and give better grades," Shanker writes. "We can expect schools with sports orientations patronized by sports-loving families, schools with orientations toward particular racial or ethnic groups for members of those groups, and so forth....There are probably some parents who would want their kids to go to schools established by the likes of David Duke."

Shanker also wonders how parents could possibly keep track of the available educational options and avoid being swindled by crooked school operators. But choice and competition would inevitably result in a contest for reputation. Choice would also encourage publishers of magazines and books to provide credible ratings of elementary and secondary schools, as they now do with colleges. Competing chains of schools would soon become familiar brand names whose owners and managers would have a powerful incentive to build and defend the integrity of their trademarks. To expect fraud to prevail, as Shanker does, is to completely misunderstand how the market for information works.

In general, Shanker has a very narrow conception of what parents should look for in a school. In "Minnesota's choice plan," he notes with concern, "40 percent of students who went to a school outside their district did so for reasons of 'convenience,' like easy transportation or the availability of day care." It's easy to belittle convenience, but that is a perfectly legitimate desire among those who would prefer to see their children spend more time at home and less time on a bus. Under a truly competitive school system, successful schools would move to where their students are, not the other way around.

Shanker's alternative to school choice is "national standards." This idea frightens me as much in education as it does in the Postal Service, national health insurance, or the IRS. We have far too much centralization of government power already, and federal credentialism could easily stamp out what little choice remains through regional rivalry and diversity.

Shanker disagrees: "It is about time we stopped saying that local control is so important." Instead, he wants the feds to decide "what our kids should know and be able to do." In the name of such "standards," the National Education Association even wants to set up union-dominated licensing boards to decide who will be allowed to teach. It's hard to imagine a more obviously self-serving attempt at cartelization.

The point of choice is to provide parents and students with what they want, not what a federal bureaucracy or education czar decides would benefit some ill-defined national crusade, such as "competitiveness." John Chubb and Terry Moe grasped this point in their powerful Brookings Institution book, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*: "It should be apparent," they wrote, "that schools have no immutable or transcendent purpose. What they are doing depends on who controls them and what those controllers want to do." Schools controlled by unions and bureaucracies want, above all, to expand their budgets and authority, while competitive schools would have no choice but to provide what parents and students want, and do so in a cost-efficient way.

In a competitive school system, many families will indeed seek schooling that is attuned to the job market, while others will prefer traditional liberal-arts, vocational, professional, or specialized training. As with any other market, though, no bureaucracy—least of all at the national level—can possibly "plan" how much of which types of schooling to supply to which students and locations. Only the people most directly involved can know enough about their own circumstances to make these choices.

Since 1975, enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools has fallen by 9.8 percent, while enrollment in private schools has risen by 7.8 percent and now constitutes 11.7 percent of total enrollment. This abandonment of inferior public schools is politically significant for two reasons.

First, there is an increasingly sizable minority of parents who are paying taxes to support public schools they do not use. This creates a growing constituency for tuition tax credits, vouchers, or simple tax rebellion—unwillingness to be plundered to support this inefficient state enterprise.

On the other hand, many of those not yet sending their children to private schools are likely to be increasingly upset by the proliferation of superior private schools that, due to these parents' soaring school tax burden, they are unable to afford. These people are also part of the constituency for genuine reform.

Signs of change have already appeared. In Indianapolis, J. Patrick Rooney, head of the Golden Rule Insurance Co., is paying half of the tuition, up to $800, for more than 700 elementary-school students from homes with modest incomes. Parents rushed to take advantage of this opportunity for their children, even though they must still pay both taxes and tuition. Similarly, bills in New Hampshire and Delaware would offer vouchers at only half the cost of public schooling, which has to be enormously attractive to both groups of parents and to the 80 percent of taxpayers who have no kids in school.

"The big problem on the horizon," Shanker announced at last year's AFT conference, "is the push for private school choice....This is a life or death battle, and it is going to be a big fight." He particularly worries about "increasing pressure within the black communities because of the dissatisfaction with the results of public schools," citing court battles and legislative proposals by blacks favoring privatization in Chicago, Kansas City, Detroit, and Milwaukee. Rooney's private voucher in Indianapolis, which only covers half the cost, shows that Shanker has good reason to worry.

Alan Reynolds is director of economic research with the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis.

DEVELOPING DEBATE

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society was founded on the notion that experts, given enough time, dollars, and computers, could wipe out poverty through pure brainpower. The sociologist, by calculating the dynamics of the ghetto, could design an urban-renewal plan that would end poverty and hunger. His intellectual cousin, the development economist, after spending a few weeks with the peasants of the Third World, could design a policy that would result in a steadily rising gross national product. (If the denizens of the Third World would use their newfound wealth to purchase American exports—well, that was a bonus.)

Today very few people believe a newly minted Ph.D. can lift a ghetto economy out of poverty simply by coming in and giving marching orders. But the notion that foreign aid can help other countries solve their problems is still a common one. The Job Corps is completely discredited, but the Peace Corps thrives, even though they were created at the same time for roughly the same reasons.

Two arguments discredited the welfare state. Charles Murray showed that welfare programs didn't result in rising incomes among the poor; and Robert Woodson and Cicero Wilson showed that when poor people take matters into their own hands, they do a better job of improving their communities than outsiders who do not understand local manners, habits, and customs.

Neither argument is used in the foreign-aid debate because there is no development economist equivalent to either Murray or Woodson. While Lord Peter Bauer has certainly shown the ill effects of foreign aid, he has never done so in a *systematic* way; his work is much more theoretical in nature, and his place in history will be closer to F. A. Hayek's than to Murray's. There is no counterpart to *Losing Ground* for India or Nigeria. And while Hernando de Soto has conclusively shown the ways that regulation in the Third World stifles enterprise and retards growth, very little research has been done on how the poor in Africa or Latin America have been locked into their destitution by the policies of national or transnational governments.

For the most part, the American media have not helped in understanding the development debate. American journalists, as a rule, know little about economics, care very little about other countries, and hate doing stories that require any background reading.

Nicholas Eberstadt conclusively shows that the Marshall Plan did little good and a great deal of harm. It preserved central controls and delayed economic reform.

So when the topic is the Third World, a subject that requires spending a good deal of time in foul places, reading dozens of impenetrable reports, and having a thorough understanding of global finance, it is little wonder that affairs of the less developed countries receive very little attention in American newspapers, magazines, and television shows. This coverage will probably shrink further with the end of the Cold War. Who will care about Angola now that communist forces have withdrawn and the waters near its coast no longer constitute a strategic sea lane?

The development debate, in fact, often begins with premises that are not necessarily true. Some writers assume a poor nation can become wealthy by proper planning by a country's economic ministry. Others are still looking for an international agency that will succeed where the World Bank, the United Nations, and the International Monetary Fund have failed and raise the incomes of poor countries without excessive interference by mandarins based in New York, Washington, or Geneva. Still others assume protectionism ensures prosperity while free trade ensures domination of the Third World by the rapacious multinationals.

Even the history of foreign aid is open to question. Consider this argument: The Marshall Plan enabled Western European countries to recover from fascism and withstand communism. Therefore, a Marshall Plan–like scheme for [Russia, Czechoslovakia, or another friendly but beleaguered country] will surely ensure the growth of another democracy.

American Enterprise Institute scholar Nicholas Eberstadt has set himself up as a one-man truth squad devoted to debunking mistaken notions about development. In the November *Commentary*, he conclusively shows that the Marshall Plan did little good and a great deal of harm.

When the Nazis conquered Europe, they instituted a comprehensive set of central-planning controls to ensure that the economies of the occupied countries fueled the German war machine. But when Marshall Plan economists arrived in ravaged Western Europe, they required countries accepting aid to maintain these fascist controls; in many nations, finance ministers used Marshall Plan aid to "postpone rather than hasten economic adjustments or 'privatizations.'" In Italy, market-oriented economists spent years convincing Marshall Planners that liberalizing the economy was a worthwhile goal.

American aid also failed to improve the ailing economies of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. Between 1945 and 1950, America spent about $1.8 billion ($7 billion in today's dollars) aiding Japan, but most of the funds were consumed by "direct handouts or by provision of supplies to make-work industries"

and did little to fuel Japanese economic growth. Between 1949 and 1961, the United States gave $1.2 billion to Taiwan and $2 billion to South Korea, but these nations stagnated until aid was cut off, forcing a shift in export-oriented policies that transformed these countries into economic giants.

Eberstadt is not an isolationist or a foe of government; he feels that American military aid made the democracies of Western Europe, Japan, and Korea more credible, thus ensuring a steady flow of business investments. But he argues that American development assistance programs are "more likely to lead a prospective beneficiary toward an Eastern Europe-style economic morass than to help it escape from one toward economic health and self-sufficiency."

But if foreign aid programs are likely to ensure that sick economies are never cured, other strategies may well result in a nation brimming with artificial health and false confidence. Some market-oriented economists, for example, have pointed with pride to the "little dragons" of the Far East—South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—as examples other nations can copy. Certainly these four are countries with steady economic growth. But as Stan Sesser shows in a hard-hitting report on Singapore in the January 13 *New Yorker*, at least in the Far East, economic freedom is often combined with massive government intervention.

Singapore's government performs many functions well. Civil servants cannot be bought; a postman was once arrested for accepting a bribe of one Singapore dollar (or 62 American cents). Government corporations are not only entrepreneurial but highly profitable; the state-owned Singapore Airlines has never had a crash and made money even during the Gulf War. Singapore has also successfully converted former British military installations into civilian enterprises; an old naval base became a shipyard, and the British air base became an international airport.

But Singapore combines capitalism with a massive amount of state intervention. The government severely restricts dissent. It bans *Cosmopolitan*, *Playboy*, satellite-reception dishes (thus blocking most Singaporeans from seeing CNN), and some albums by Eric Clapton, the Rolling Stones, and Elton John (because of drug references); Singapore barred jukeboxes until July 1991. Not flushing a public urinal can result in a fine of up to 1,000 Singapore dollars and publication of one's photograph in the newspaper.

"The tattered remains of Asian communist parties," Sesser reports, "are looking to Singapore as a model of how to maintain tight control over a nation's government and over its people's lives while simultaneously quelling discontent by freeing its economy." Sesser says that Singaporean scholar Russell Heng even contends that his nation's "neo-authoritarian" government "could emerge as the next ideological challenge to democratic capitalism." With friends such as these, one cannot endorse Singapore's style of government without qualification, even if the country's subways make a profit.

But a world made of capitalist democracies and Singapore-style states would be far preferable to the world foreseen by some environmentalists. In the Winter *World Policy Journal*, David C. Korten of the People-Centered Development Forum argues that the world economy should be controlled neither by global government agencies nor by multinational corporations, but by the "democratically controlled institutions at the global, national, and local level" that would "create a decentralizing frame for economic activities."

In Korten's utopia, capitalism would exist, but primarily as a means for transmitting information from the rich countries to the poor ones. Antitrust agreements would smash or severely restrict most multinational corporations. Those that survived would be forced to abandon patents that Third World governments might find useful. By "relinquishing its monopolistic control of technology," says Korten, the developed world can make "partial restitution" for "the wealth it has already consumed."

While Korten would permit some trade, John Cavanaugh of the Institute for Policy Studies and John Gershman of the Institute for Food and Development Policy argue in the February *Progressive* that free trade must be stopped, as it reduces wages, weakens unions, damages the environment, and introduces goods into the market that poor people can't buy. "How many people can afford the mangoes, star apples, and kiwi fruit that now add color to Safeway's grocery sections?" ask Cavanaugh and Gershman.

The local Safeway, in the middle of February, sold kiwi fruit for 50 cents and star fruit for 89 cents each—not terribly expensive compared to apples selling for $1.19 a pound. (Perhaps Cavanaugh and Gershman don't do the shopping in their households.) One can only guess how much these fruits would cost if the "new international institutions and norms" these authors want to control all trade were in place.

The problem with the environmental critique of development is that there is no third way between the state and capitalism. For over 40 years, the left has called for democratically controlled government organizations, but such institutions, once created, swiftly ignore the wishes of the people. Korten does not give any examples of existing government organizations that would be role models for his new world order; one suspects that such organizations do not exist—and, given the nature of government, cannot exist.

One should also question the notion that protectionism helps the global economy. When a multinational corporation transfers jobs to the Third World, they are playing not Scrooge but Robin Hood; they take from the rich (well-paid union workers) and give to millions of poor consumers. Certainly multinationals have done more to provide a wide variety of goods to consumers than any national or transnational bureaucracy.

The Third World needs no more handouts; it needs honest work. The best way to provide such work is to eliminate the protectionist barriers that act to increase Third World starvation and price many First World goods beyond the means of the poor.

Contributing Editor Martin Morse Wooster is a writer, editor, and researcher living in Silver Spring, Maryland.

FREE AT LAST

BY JULIO MARQUEZ

The economic turnaround of Argentina in the last two years constitutes one of the most remarkable free-market success stories of recent memory. As recently as 1989, Argentina's inflation rate was 5,000 percent, and the country was submerged in a decade-long depression. Throughout the 1980s, unemployment, capital flight, and national productivity were at their worst levels in the country's history.

Argentine President Carlos Saul Menem's radical reforms include a law barring the government from printing money to cover a deficit.

Successive administrations, both civilian and military, could not reverse the downfall, until three years ago, when a new president, Carlos Saul Menem, identified the root cause: excessive government intervention in the economy. Menem has now taken the country through a dramatic economic U-turn, and the results thus far are quite impressive.

Argentina's economic woes can be traced as far back as the early 1950s. At that time, President Juan Domingo Peron and his wife Evita instituted a populist and protectionist government that centralized most economic decision making, nationalized basic industries, granted great political power to labor unions, and increased government spending to the detriment of the economy.

In nine years, Argentina went from a post-war boom to a serious recession, and Peron was ousted by a coup. Military rule alternated with civilian government until 1973. The military exacerbated the policies of centralization by exerting greater political control over the population while continuing Peron's failed economic strategy; the civilian administrations were unable or unwilling to reverse course. Meanwhile, the economy worsened.

In 1973, elections were held, and Peronism made a comeback: Peron and his third wife, Isabel, returned from exile to rule the country, he as president, she as vice president. Peron died shortly thereafter, and Isabel, accused of corruption and mismanagement amid further economic deterioration, was overthrown by a coup in 1976.

The military promised but did not deliver a change in policies, concentrating instead on persecuting the opposition. The economy continued on its downward trend, and when the ruling junta attempted to divert popular attention by invading the Falkland Islands in 1982, they were defeated by the British and voluntarily relinquished power.

A new democratic system was established in 1983. While Raul Alfonsin, who presided until 1989, improved the country's human-rights record, he made no serious attempt to reform Argentina's centralized and overregulated economic structure. Inflation soared, the country defaulted on its international obligations, and the economy hit bottom. Alfonsin's Radical Party then suffered a landslide electoral defeat.

Enter the administration of Carlos Menem. In July 1989, he promised to undertake a series of fundamental policy changes to reduce the role of the government in the economy and empower the private sector. Menem's policies centered on privatization of state enterprises, tax cuts, tax reform, deregulation, drastic reduction of government expenditures, and the opening of markets to foreign competition.

In spite of initial public opposition stemming mostly from organized labor, Menem kept his word. The government plans to have privatized most large, state-owned firms by the end of the year. Menem has abolished 36 regulatory agencies and lifted the restrictions on the import and retail sale of hundreds of products. He has slashed the federal work force by 20 percent.

Argentina has opened its borders, and it is now negotiating a regional free-trade pact with Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay. The country is also seeking to enter into a free-trade arrangement with the United States, modeled after the one expected to be signed by the United States and Canada with Mexico. To pave the way, Argentina has cut its industrial tariffs to 11 percent from 22 percent.

The government also cut the top marginal personal tax rate from 45 percent to 30 percent and slashed the top corporate tax rate from 33 percent to 20 percent. Argentina has eliminated the capital-gains tax for individuals as well as the capital-gains tax on stock and bond transactions by foreigners.

In what is perhaps the most significant move, the legislature early last year made it illegal for the government to print money to cover a public deficit; money creation is now limited by law to the sum

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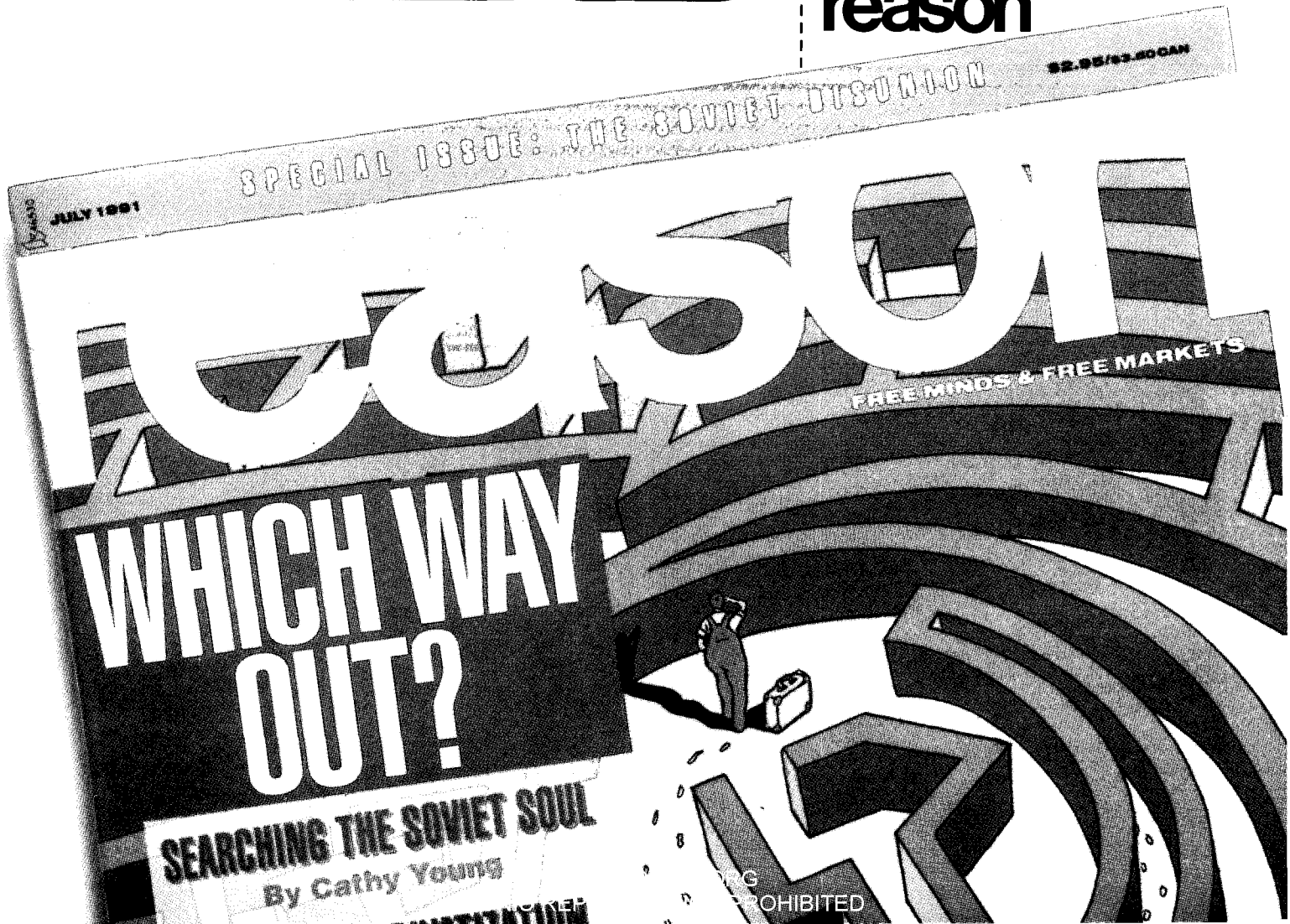

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ARGENTINA

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Tangible results have been quick and impressive. Income from privatization combined with spending cuts created a budget surplus of nearly $3.2 billion in 1991; a larger surplus is expected in 1992, due to additional privatization and growth in tax revenue generated by new economic activity. Real economic growth has revived, reaching 3 percent last year. Experts expect the economy to grow by more than 6 percent this year. In 1991 the inflation rate dropped to 15 percent for the consumer price index and 3.3 percent for the producer price index—a truly astounding achievement. Economists expect both rates to be halved in 1992.

The capital markets have responded enthusiastically: The Argentine stock exchange's capitalization exploded from $3.3 billion in 1989 to nearly $20 billion. Foreign investment is up 50 percent, to nearly $7 billion. Argentina has now resumed foreign-debt payments, and Menem decided to increase the payments so that the $26-billion foreign debt can be eliminated more rapidly. Moreover, the country is likely to obtain concessions on reducing its principal, perhaps by as much as 40 percent, in upcoming negotiations with creditors and the U.S. Treasury.

Confidence indicators among both Argentine and foreign investors have reached record highs. At home, Menem's Justicialist Party has consolidated its majority through substantial gains in all local and midterm congressional elections held last year.

These victories are especially significant because they took place despite a series of well-publicized political difficulties, namely Menem's womanizing and the alleged involvement of some of his advisers and members of his estranged wife's family in drug-money laundering. Confidence abroad is evidenced by the first successful placement of Argentine bonds in the Euromarket in late 1991, totaling $300 million. That the issue was placed at all suggests that fears regarding Argentina's credit worthiness are on the wane.

The Menem government has also been active in labor legislation, seeking to undermine the power of trade unions, which have provided the only source of opposition to his policies. In December 1991, a new labor code, which had been stalled in congress for the last two years, was approved. The law makes labor contracts more flexible, reduces severance payments, and sets a cap on worker's compensation. Before the reform, firms were reluctant to hire new employees because of the high cost of severance, particularly since labor courts invariably ruled against management. Economists now expect significant expansion in employment.

Undoubtedly, Argentina has undergone a remarkable turnaround that invites serious attention to its strong investment potential. The democratic character of the country adds to its appeal; it is a far cry from the military juntas and their related human-rights abuses of a decade ago, and the electoral system set in place in 1983 seems solid, as evidenced by the large turnouts and peaceful and honest outcomes.

President Menem's term runs to 1995, and he remains steadfastly committed to economic reform and economic growth. Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo is also a committed classical free-market supply-sider. He told *Forbes* magazine, "I'm often asked in Argentina, 'Why are you eliminating trade restrictions, reducing tariffs on imports, at the same time you see the Congress of the U.S. fighting for protection against Japanese imports?' [But] even though in some Western countries the trend is still to bigger government, if you look at the world as a whole, there is the bigger market economy, the smaller consolidated public sector. The trend is toward a market-oriented economy."

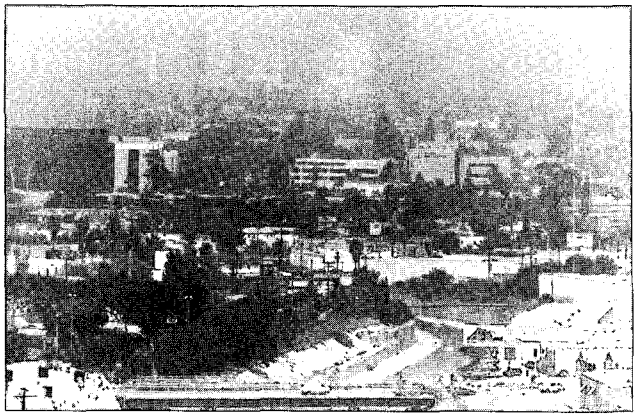
If present trends continue, and with per-capita income and employment now at substantially higher levels, every Argentine citizen may become a free-market champion soon.

Julio Marquez is an international banker specializing in Latin America.

INSUFFICIENT DATA

BY RICK HENDERSON

I used to live in North Carolina. Just before I left the state and started to work for REASON, I bought a new car. Because my move to California left me strapped for cash, I waited several months to register the car. I had two worries: I knew my insurance rates would increase (indeed, they quadrupled); and I feared my car wouldn't pass the state smog check. California's clean-air rules are the toughest in the country. New cars sold there often have extra pollution-control equipment that costs hundreds of dollars to install.



Are smog regulators relying on bad data and ineffective rules? The National Academy of Sciences says yes.

Because I didn't have enough money to purchase extra pollution gear, I hesitated to take the smog check. (Eventually I did take the test and passed easily.) But I didn't question the need for tougher emissions standards in smoggy Los Angeles. After all, air quality there is terrible. Tough regulations of some kind are necessary, and these regulators know what they're doing, right?

Maybe not. Last December, a study by the prestigious National Academy of Sciences concluded that the nation's environmental regulators have no idea how bad urban air pollution is. Couched in the careful language of researchers, the 450-page study, *Rethinking the Ozone Problem in Urban and Regional Air Pollution*, is one of the most important documents in the history of pollution regulation. It cites scores of shortcomings in the methods researchers and regulators have used to both develop and implement pollution-control programs during the last two decades.

The authors recommend "major changes...to correct scientific and technical difficulties in the nation's regulatory programs" that control urban smog (or, in the nomenclature of pollution researchers, "tropospheric ozone"). As federal and state pollution regulators implement the massive Clean Air Act of 1990, NAS researchers send two clear signals: Urban smog is worse than the Environmental Protection Agency admits, and current regulations won't do much about it.

The Clean Air Act of 1970 requires the EPA to set national air-quality standards and then to develop policies to maintain them. In 1978, EPA Administrator Douglas Costle set the tropospheric ozone standard at 120 parts per billion; the 1990 Clean Air Act maintains that same standard.

The NAS study, which Congress mandated as part of the 1990 law, didn't ask whether 120 ppb is an appropriate standard—and, because individuals respond differently to air pollution, medical researchers aren't sure what that standard should be. Any standard requires a trade-off between scientific, political, and economic factors. So the NAS researchers instead focused on the models the EPA uses to estimate ozone levels, the information the agency receives from those models, and the policies it has used to maintain air-quality standards.

Ozone is a variety of oxygen that forms when ultraviolet rays from sunlight combine volatile organic compounds (hydrocarbons that often come from paint or gasoline fumes or from unburned fuel in badly tuned cars) with oxides of nitrogen (which come from burning fossil fuels). Some volatile organics react with NOx more readily than others. And ozone forms most rapidly in the lower atmosphere on days when the temperature is 90 degrees or warmer and the air is relatively still.

But ozone formation is a complicated process. The NAS researchers say regulators have ignored these complexities and followed one-size-fits-all policies that actually increase pollution.

Consider the proportion of VOCs to NOx in an air basin. Ozone forms when the ratio of VOCs to NOx is between 8:1 and 20:1. When the ratio is outside that range, it's tougher for smog to develop. Federal pollution-reduction plans, the NAS scientists say, have assumed that the ratios in heavily polluted areas are in that range and have focused almost exclusively on reducing VOCs. (Caltech chemical engineering professor John Seinfeld, the study's principal author, says VOCs are easier to control than NOx.)

But if the VOC/NOx ratio in an area is higher than 20:1, reducing VOC emissions alone can reduce that ratio to a level that encourages smog. When that happens, without controls to reduce NOx, VOC cuts may lead to more pollution.

So it's essential for regulators to accurately measure VOC and NOx levels in a region before they impose pollution controls. The NAS scientists say these measurements haven't been done. They say ozone-reduction plans depend "too much on the assumption that emissions inventories are accurate, and not enough on adequate checks and tests of these inventories."

For example, the EPA bases its inventories of VOC and NOx emissions on the amount of pollutants that should accumulate in the atmosphere if state pollution-reduction plans are at least 80-percent

effective. The NAS study calls this assumption "a major fallacy." Rarely do regulators back up their estimates with actual measurements of pollutants in the atmosphere. Because some technologies don't work as well as expected, and because other regulations aren't enforced, state regulators say their plans deliver only half the pollution reductions the EPA claims.

Also, the data the EPA uses to report on national ozone trends are faulty. The EPA caused enormous alarm when it reported that 98 metropolitan areas were out of compliance with national air-quality standards in 1990, up from 63 areas in 1987. But the NAS study questions the accuracy of these readings. It says the yardstick the EPA uses to measure compliance—the number of days an area is allowed to exceed 120 ppb—"varies considerably from year to year." Most of the variation comes from "natural fluctuations in the weather," not from "year-to-year changes in emissions."

Regulatory plans, says the study, have failed for at least two reasons: Emissions models have ignored naturally occurring VOCs, and regulators have designed ineffective inspection-and-maintenance programs for cars.

One of Ronald Reagan's memorable gaffes occurred in the 1980 presidential campaign, when he alleged that trees cause smog. The pundits of that time enjoyed a chuckle, but the Gipper was right. Plants "exhale" both oxygen and VOCs. Indeed, the NAS study reports that in Atlanta and other parts of the Southeastern United States, vegetation produces more VOCs than cars or factories. Even in the Northeast, trees and other vegetation from rural and suburban areas produce a hefty amount of volatile organics. And when wildfires (or people) burn trees or undergrowth, NOx results. "Killer trees" really exist.

Unfortunately, the NAS team reports, air-pollution models have ignored these naturally occurring pollutants. VOC emissions from trees and other vegetation would cause many areas along the eastern seaboard to have summertime ozone levels of 120 ppb or higher even if all the region's cars and factories somehow stopped running. In these areas, policies that reduce VOC emissions but ignore NOx cost billions but cut smog little if at all.

Regulators assume that motor vehicles cause about 40 percent of the VOC and NOx emissions and 90 percent of the carbon-monoxide emissions in cities. They base these estimates on measurements taken from cars hooked up to pollution-testing devices in garages, not from actual measurements of cars on the road. Cars in use pollute more heavily than they do when idling. Pollution from older cars also increases rapidly as these cars fall out of repair. The NAS scientists conclude that "the percentage of VOCs from mobile sources [cars and trucks] is much greater than the percentage of mobile-source emissions used in each State Implementation Plan"—perhaps two to four times greater.

Enhanced inspection-and-maintenance programs (a.k.a. smog checks) and proposals to make new cars run 99-percent cleaner than they did in 1970 will do little to cut pollution. Only programs that clean up dirty cars in use will help.

Not surprisingly, then, the scientists who wrote the NAS study, led by Seinfeld, enthusiastically support the portable, infrared pollution-testing device designed by University of Denver chemistry professor Donald Stedman. (See "Going Mobile," Aug./Sept. 1990.) Stedman's device can accurately measure the carbon-monoxide and hydrocarbon pollution of cars in motion; this machine can identify the 10 percent of cars that cause 50 percent of all automotive pollution.

Seinfeld believes that pollution regulators could use the device to locate these grossly polluting cars and require their owners to repair them. If, as the NAS scientists fear, cars cause much more than 40 percent of VOC and NOx emissions in cities, enforcing pollution regulations with Stedman's device could cut smog cheaply and in a hurry.

The study also examined proposals that mandate the use of alternative automotive fuels—a growing component of state pollution-control plans. Most of the VOCs caused by cars come from evaporating gasoline fumes and from fuel that hasn't completely combusted. Such "oxygenated" fuels as gasohol and methanol tend to burn more completely than gasoline; but the NAS study found that, on balance, use of alternative fuels would do little to cut overall pollution.

For example, when a methanol-fueled engine is cold, it emits formaldehyde, the science-project hydrocarbon that is not only unpleasant to breathe but may be carcinogenic. The study says that "high [formaldehyde] emissions, if not properly controlled, may negate any potential advantage of [methanol-fueled vehicles]." Also, the study continues, it "is not clear methanol use would lead to lower NOx emissions."

As for ethanol, the alcohol-based fuel so prominent on Sunday talk-show commercials, "limited tests [of ethanol-fueled vehicles] show high emissions." The study also says "using ethanol as a blending agent in gasoline [that is, as gasohol] would not achieve significant air-quality benefits, and in fact would likely be detrimental."

The study does praise natural gas as an automotive fuel, but there are few natural-gas vehicles or fueling outlets. Perhaps the most convenient way to increase natural-gas use would be to replace diesel-fueled bus fleets with buses that run on natural gas.

Electric cars, which California and other states may force people to buy, don't get off the hook either. An electric car in use produces no air pollution. But the electricity to power the car has to come from somewhere. The study says if that power comes from a coal-fired electric power plant, "increased NOx emissions from electricity-generating stations could lead to increased regional ozone that can be transported [by wind currents] into cities." In other words, using electric cars might not cut smog at all.

Because the National Academy of Sciences is a research body, not a policy-making agency, its study recommends few regulatory changes. However, environmental and industry groups were happy to provide their own conclusions from the study.

David G. Hawkins, senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Coun-

cil and an EPA assistant administrator during the Carter years, said the study reveals a need to clamp down on existing regulations. Hawkins told *The New York Times*, "We've been doing the wrong thing in neglecting nitrogen oxide control. It's not that we should do less volatile organic control."

By contrast, Terry Yosie of the American Petroleum Institute said the study shows that policy makers have "a fundamental lack of knowledge about ozone [formation]." If the NAS concludes "we're flying blind," Yosie continued, "why trust the pilots in charge of the aircraft now?"

"They're both right," says Seinfeld. He calls the air-quality models excellent tools to help craft policies. "The problem is what goes into the models." As the study points out, inaccurate emissions inventories, pollution-control plans that overstate their own effectiveness, and the failure of regulators to check their data make it impossible to design strategies that have any serious impact on urban smog. Above all, the NAS scientists urge carefully designed policies that consider such local factors as weather patterns and naturally occurring emissions.

Not likely. Sadly, this report has already reached the remainder pile. Scientific studies that don't project apocalypse, or that question the actions of regulators, just don't cut it as policy guides. The 10-year, $500 million federal NAPAP study said acid rain was no big deal. Yet after NAPAP was complete, the federal government used an acid-rain terror campaign to justify the 1990 Clean Air Act. (See "Acid Test," January.)

The Bush administration could use this NAS survey of peer-reviewed studies to revamp its smog regulations. Instead it is promoting methanol production, electric cars, and a program to buy back old cars—not gross polluters, but any old clunker. Perhaps the president's pledge to review and revise overly burdensome regulations was just another campaign promise to be broken. At least he could have waited until after the election.

Rick Henderson is Washington editor of REASON.

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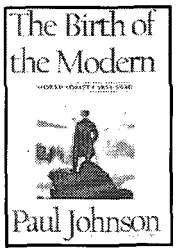

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The Poor Among Us

BY CASSANDRA CHRONES MOORE

Rude Awakenings: What the Homeless Crisis Tells Us
By Richard W. White Jr., San Francisco: ICS Press, 330 pages, $24.95

In *Rude Awakenings: What the Homeless Crisis Tells Us*, Richard White provides a refreshingly straightforward appraisal of a much deplored and much misunderstood problem, homelessness in the United States. Reviewing a score of social-service programs and a decade of debate, White debunks two myths—that of the 3 million homeless said to haunt our city streets and the repeated claim that "Housing NOW" will make them disappear.

The first chapter, "Lying for Justice," easily one of the most powerful, traces the exploitation of the numbers. Appearing on Ted Koppel's *Nightline* in May 1984, Mitch Snyder, founder of the Community for Creative Nonviolence, denounced as a politically motivated undercount a study carefully conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that had estimated the number of homeless nationwide at 250,000 to 350,000. Instead he proclaimed that 1 of every 100 Americans—2 million to 3 million in all—were homeless. Although Snyder himself later said he had fabricated the number, the media publicized the figure and the advocates ran with it, sinking the HUD estimate under the waves of political outcry. National surveys by the National Bureau of Economic Research (1986) and the Urban Institute (1987) validated the HUD estimate, but the myth has proved nearly indestructible. (Just last March, *Nightline* cited advocate estimates of 3 million to 4 million homeless.)

The pattern of mendacity has repeated itself in the willful minimizing of alcoholism, substance abuse, mental illness, and even of criminality among the homeless. Not until Robert Hayes, director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, acknowledged in 1989 the problems of alcohol and drug addiction did a more realistic picture begin to emerge. Even now it is possible to find in popular accounts echoes of the belief that the homeless are "just like us," plain folk down on their luck. The media continue to depict as the norm that rarity, the intact family of father, mother, and children, even though most homeless "families" are headed by a single mother.

How did "lying for justice" become so popular? In a later chapter, "Manufacturing a Crisis," White documents the mechanism. In the late '70s Mitch Snyder had fasted and led the homeless into Washington, D.C.'s Union Station. In 1979 Robert Hayes won a "right to shelter" for everybody in New York City. But it took Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency to make homelessness a household word. According to White, antipoverty bureaucrats and their supporters, viscerally opposed to the president, circled the wagons, "manufacturing" the "crisis" to protect antipoverty agencies and budgets.

In the early '80s the homeless did, in fact, become increasingly visible, attracting public attention and concern, but White contends that the news media inflated the issue out of all proportion. "Instead of being defined by editors as a local human interest, social justice, or politics story, homelessness came to be seen as an element in a big national story, the page-one story of Reagan's budget cuts," even though the budget cuts had not yet been enacted by Congress, let alone taken effect.

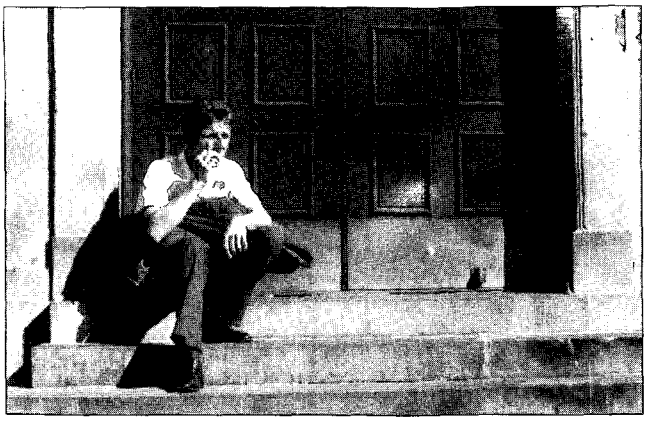
Pro-Democrat, anti-Reagan bureaucrats and politicians, in tandem with the media, set out to slay the conservative dragon. Unfortunately, the liberal knights charged into a vacuum. Academic research on homelessness was all but nonexistent, and social scientists, generally liberal in their sympathies, were unlikely to mount studies that might counter the charges. The Reagan administration itself compounded the problem by minimizing the issue or denying its existence. White here glosses over a basic strategic error—the administration's failure to utilize the factual evidence of the HUD report. Instead of supporting their own researchers, HUD and the White House retreated, allowing grossly inflated estimates to go all but unchallenged.

A lengthy analysis of housing policies and practices serves to challenge the second myth, that building more housing is the answer. Although White acknowledges the lack of "appropriate housing and alternative housing" as a factor contributing to homelessness, he skewers the belief that construction of housing is itself the issue.

Instead he points to misguided policies that reduce or constrict supply. Urban renewal swept away thousands of low-income homes and single-room-occupancy hotels, replacing them with much more expensive housing. Growth controls, encoded in such socially acceptable mechanisms as exclusionary zoning policies and building codes, all but completed the devastation. Environmentalists then picked up the torch. Unless air, water, and earth are returned to Edenic purity, nobody is to build.

White discusses carefully the critical role of rent control, which constricts supply, contributing to homelessness by raising rents and lowering vacancy rates. He believes, however, that only extreme regulations, such as those of New York

City, Santa Monica, and Berkeley, contribute significantly to homelessness. Citing a report by the Economic Policy Institute, he asserts that moderate controls, which exempt new construction, allow vacancy decontrol, and permit rents to rise in tandem with costs, have a negligible effect on the supply of housing and hence on homelessness. Indeed, moderate rent control "does not seem to have discouraged the construction of new rental housing except for the first few years after implementation."



The media continue to promote the mistaken notion that the homeless are "just like us," plain folk down on their luck.

The claim is tendentious and simplistic. How many units would have been built in those "first few years" had there been no controls? White also faults William Tucker, author of *The Excluded Americans*, for failing to recognize that "low-income housing is not profitable without government subsidy." He is correct, of course, in recognizing the subsidy provided by the tax deduction for mortgage interest, but his solution is to extend that subsidy and others, such as mortgage insurance and loan guarantee programs, farther down the economic scale.

In other words, White distrusts the free market and is reluctant to recommend market-oriented policies. While decrying restrictive governmental policies and massive federal intervention, he cannot bring himself to abolish rent control, support vouchers unreservedly, and impose costs on municipalities practicing exclusionary zoning.

The book also provides a substantive analysis of the failures in delivery of mental health services following the deinstitutionalization of the 1960s and the consequences for the 30 percent to 40 percent of the homeless who are mentally ill. Many of the community mental-health centers envisioned never materialized; those that did tended to concentrate on prevention or counseling for the "worried well," rather than treatment of the seriously disturbed. Given the shortage of space in mental hospitals and the legal barriers to commitment, many with acute mental illness end up on the streets, free to freeze to death.

As an approach to a solution, White recommends an integrated system of mental-health treatment that would depend heavily on case management, supportive residential programs, and hospitalization when advisable. The need for treatment, rather than danger to self or others, would once more become the criterion for commitment and for care in the community.

While there is a good case to be made that truly deranged individuals—those suffering from hallucinations, for instance—are not well served when left on the street, White's eagerness to commit people involuntarily to mental hospitals is troublesome. Even if we grant that someone "needs therapy," we must still answer the questions of which therapy, by whom, where, and for how long. And, in answering these questions, White's authoritarian approach is anything but comforting. Indeed, his suggestion that "electroconvulsive therapy...deserves rehabilitation" comes as a shock.

Substance abuse, "the number-one factor in homelessness," is by far more common among the homeless than extreme mental illness, making White's series of detailed interviews with service providers who deal with such abuse particularly valuable. He reviews at length the protective payee program for alcoholics, authorized by Washington state and implemented vigorously by Seattle. Instead of receiving a general assistance check, a client is given the choice of undergoing treatment or having his welfare payment administered for him. The combination of treatment and a stipend has attracted younger alcoholics and drug abusers but has done little for those with chronic, long-term problems except to keep them off the streets.

A brief survey of research and governmental programs, however, results in the disturbing conclusion that "it looks as if alcoholism treatment works, but we do not really know that it does." There is a great need, therefore, for longitudinal studies evaluating the match of treatment for alcoholism to the client. The National Institute of Alcohol and Alcoholism (NIAAA) has just begun such a multiyear study, but until the results are in, government policy and the expenditure of huge sums of taxpayer dollars are founded generally on faith.

White makes a persuasive case for increased research and evaluation, even if they lead only to modest gains, and an even more persuasive case for rethinking our attitude toward drug abuse. Instead of regarding alcoholism and cocaine addiction as "illnesses" that can be "cured"—a belief for which medical evidence is lacking—he suggests we should think about returning moral responsibility to the individual. Organizations, of which Alcoholics Anonymous is the best example, seem to succeed by building support groups, then emphasizing individual decisions for sobriety. "Right now," says White, "this is the best we know how to do."

The last and arguably the weakest of the book's three sections focuses on overarching remedies for homelessness that reflect White's social philosophy of community. He argues that homelessness is traceable to the disintegration of the family caused in large part by the extension of untrammeled individual rights, uncoupled from a personal sense of responsibility. The government now functions in loco parentis, but unlike the functional family, which guides its offspring toward independence, welfare

J. P. PLUNIER

programs rarely call recipients to account and fuel never-ending dependency.

Citing AFDC as the prime instance of a well-intentioned but ultimately destructive program, White favors abolishing the program. Instead, he would encourage employment by creating jobs, if necessary, through community-based "workfare," while using tax credits and other governmental supports to bring income to a minimum level. Eliminating a program that encourages dependency is a worthy goal, but White's prescription simply creates a more complicated system of government intervention.

Equally arguable is the assertion that "economic rationalism" has led to massive social disruption. Moving undoubtedly places strains on families and friends and may indeed push the unstable over the edge into substance abuse or even mental illness. But it is difficult to blame "leveraged buyouts, mergers, acquisitions, and relocations" for the emergence of homelessness.

Overall, White's approach is cautious. He would rebuild social infrastructure, but he would use a kinder, gentler government policy to do so. He is a reformer, not a revolutionary. These caveats aside, *Rude Awakenings* is a helpful, often perceptive, nontechnical overview of a continuing problem. It deserves a place on the shelves of all those professionally concerned with the issue or simply disturbed by the continuing presence of beggars on our streets.

Cassandra Chrones Moore is an adjunct scholar with the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Selfish Pursuits

BY CATHY YOUNG

The Rise of Selfishness in America, by James Lincoln Collier
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 308 pages, $24.95

If there is one thing that both conservatives and liberals are against, it's selfishness, though they usually don't mean the same things by it. Conservatives rail against selfish women who pursue careers instead of motherhood and decry the loosening of family and church constraints on personal behavior. (Liberals call that self-expression and privacy.) Liberals lament the selfishness of taxpayers who want to keep more of their money and business owners who put profits ahead of the common good. (Conservatives call that individualism and free enterprise.) Historian James Lincoln Collier is one of those rare consistent minds who dislikes both economic and social individualism.

Part social history, part moral diatribe, *The Rise of Selfishness in America* can also be seen as an addition to recent revisionist scholarship seeking to vindicate the Victorian Age. Like Gertrude Himmelfarb (though his politics are quite different), Collier challenges the stereotype of Victorians as stuffy, hypocritical prudes: "These people, as a society, set for themselves goals of...charity, self-control, a decent regard for the welfare of others, a willingness to protect the weak."

Collier stresses that he doesn't idealize the Victorian Age; he merely wants to show that "there was a lot of good along with the bad." Indeed, he argues convincingly that the Victorian concern with order and decency arose in response to the crudity of habits in previous generations, when people ate with their fingers, rarely bathed, and lived amidst manure and garbage. Even the Victorian ideal of the delicate, chaste woman who would exert an uplifting influence on her husband was arguably a step up from the earlier view of women as lustful, devious creatures to be kept under strict male control.

The core of the Victorian ethos, says Collier, was self-restraint and self-sacrifice. He finds the only true realization of this ideal in 19th-century rural and semi-rural America. The farmers in loosely scattered homesteads were more independent than European villagers, but, Collier maintains, "not individualistic as we understand the term today." The farm economy bound families tightly together. Most Americans were "enmeshed in a web of family and community relationships in which subordination to the wishes of the group...was the essential rule."

Collier admits that "it was not always heaven inside of such human groups, for there was always friction and constriction in them," but he believes it paid off in "the sense of security" and "warmth of feeling." Except for such generalizations, he has very little to say about the actual realities of this way of life, saving his descriptive talents for the turpitude that replaced it.

For even as the Victorian idea was "becoming the dominant code of American society," it was undermined by a number of countervailing influences. Industrialization lured young men and women from the farm into the city, where they lived "unsupervised, and largely unsupervisable." Urbanization loosened personal ties and spawned the notorious vice districts, dedicated to everything Victorianism abhorred: drinking, gambling, dancing, and sex. (By the turn of the century about 40 percent of middle-class men visited prostitutes.) Immigration brought in people steeped in non-Victorian values and uninterested in curbing their sensual appetites.

The reformers of the 1900s sought to reimpose Victorian morality through legal restrictions rather than appeals to self-restraint. Yet just as victory seemed near, the American middle class switched sides: It was, Collier believes, "simply seduced." Every technological or social development boosted "the new ethic of the self." The phonograph and radio brought the virus of entertainment into the middle-class home. The automobile hastened the fragmentation of family and society, allowing teenagers to escape parental authority and fool around. Even the Great Depression didn't help much, as New Deal idealism was offset by the perverse desire of Americans to dip into

their tattered pockets to watch Fred Astaire whirl around with Ginger Rogers.

Collier is kinder to the 1950s, the era of "togetherness" when the suburbs brought back small communities and men toiled in boring jobs to provide for their families while women stayed home with the kids. But you just can't win. Prosperity inevitably led to more self-indulgence and materialism, culminating in the plague of television. Divorce and premarital sex rates continued to climb until they soared in the 1970s, when self-gratification came out of the closet. By the 1980s, Collier grumbles, "the American people began electing governments that promised to leave them alone as much as possible to do their own thing....And in doing so they made selfishness the *official* policy of the United States."

The Rise of Selfishness in America is a highly readable, informative account of the transformation of American mores in the last 150 years. As philosophical analysis, however, it suffers from major inconsistencies. Collier often confuses the concepts of self-interest, individualism, and self-indulgence, causing him to overlook the individualist elements in Victorianism. It was Ralph Waldo Emerson, mentioned here as a champion of the Victorian ideal, who wrote, "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist" and "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself."

The fact that the Victorian work ethic wasn't purely selfless but had plenty to do with upward mobility and success is only acknowledged obliquely, when Collier says of 19th-century immigrants, "Indifferent to the Victorian notions of success...they wanted to enjoy their lives as much as possible through the warmth of associations with family and friends," as well as by drinking and dancing in saloons. That would seem to make them more hedonistic but less individualistic than the "authentic" Victorians.

Collier frowns on solitary and "passive" pastimes; hence his loathing of TV: "So long as we are engaged with the magic box, we are not engaged with others." But the formula "solitary equals passive equals hedonistic" is clearly faulty. Reading, a favorite Victorian leisure activity, is no less isolated than TV watching, while "hedonistic" dancing is both active and interactive (come to think of it, so is sex). Today's diet and exercise craze is self-centered but hardly self-indulgent, while recovery groups are interactive but devoted to the exploration and healing of self.

Collier believes that the American people in the 1980s made selfishness the official policy of the United States.

Despite these contradictions, and the often annoying finger wagging, some of Collier's concerns cannot be dismissed—particularly his warnings about the cost to America's children of the adults' pursuit of self-expression. He somewhat exaggerates the decline of the American family (even making the ludicrous claim that the number of children placed in day care in America today is without precedent, when it is far below the proportion in ex-communist countries or in Scandinavia) and is unreasonably harsh on working mothers, most of whom, far from indulging themselves, try as best they can to balance what's best for them and what's best for their children.

But the basic truths remain that too many kids are being raised in one-parent households, which a growing body of research shows is not good, and that too many people "have children without accepting any concomitant responsibility for taking care of them."

The critique of modern American society and the prescriptions for change outlined in his last chapter place Collier in the new "communitarian" school of thought, represented by Amitai Etzioni and Robert Bellah, which calls for responsibilities—to the family as well as to the state—to balance our perceived overemphasis on rights. And in many ways, Collier epitomizes the weaknesses of this approach. He makes no distinction between personal responsibility and responsibility for strangers, between a woman's "right" to have children she cannot support and a citizen's right to support his own children rather than hers. Incredibly, he never makes a connection between the rise of single motherhood and welfare programs.

In small communities, Collier writes, people cared for the needy because the needy were real human beings next door: "We were not created to respond viscerally to abstractions." And yet his ultimate cure for what ails us is—guess what—more taxes for social programs. (The relative reluctance of Americans to invest in the public sector somehow becomes another manifestation of hedonism—even though one need look no further than Sweden to see that a hypertrophied public sector can coexist with an ideal of self-gratification far more "official" than in the United States.)

Despite his misgivings about day care, Collier wants more government involvement in it, to ensure that profit-seekers don't take over and that poor children get quality care. He doesn't stop to think that higher taxes and cheaper child care would push more mothers into the labor force and that impersonal bureaucratized institutions would replace the neighborhood, church, and community settings in which most children of working parents are cared for at present.

Communities work precisely because they are based on personal ties, and, as Charles Murray demonstrated in *In Pursuit: Of Happiness and Good Government*, when the state takes over their functions—including aid to the needy—it only weakens communities. Reliance on the state makes people not only less self-reliant (and less responsible) but less likely to rely on support networks. It is in the inner city that both dependence on

government and the breakdown of normal social bonds is at its most extreme.

And it is simply not true that in modern society, communities and private organizations can no longer provide mutual care and support. While Collier paints the 1980s as a monochromatic caricature, in contrast to his far more shaded portrayal of other eras, the "greed decade" was also a time when charitable donations skyrocketed and Americans devoted an increasing number of hours to volunteer service.

Collier's real fear is that when relationships and obligations are a matter of choice, people will chuck them off to pursue whatever pleasures they can. For all the assurances that he doesn't wish to return to Victorian paternalism, one detects an unmistakable note of nostalgia when he writes that in farm communities, economic needs fostered a mutual dependency that "*forced* people to live inside of intense personal bonds." (Emphasis mine.)

Yet millions of Americans have shown that voluntary ties can work; people still come together to find a neighbor's missing child or to raise money for an uninsured co-worker's surgery. Collier himself points out that personal and social bonds are good for people, that families and communities can be a source of profound fulfillment. He just seems to think most people couldn't possibly be trusted to make that conclusion for themselves.

Contributing Editor Cathy Young is a writer in Middletown, New Jersey.

Blood in the Water

BY JEFF JACOBY

Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics
By Larry J. Sabato, New York: The Free Press, 306 pages, $22.95

Dismay over the state of American journalism is a tradition as old as the republic. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville lamented that "the characteristics of the American journalist consist in an open and coarse appeal to the passions of his readers; he abandons principles to assail the characters of individuals, to track them into private life and disclose all their weaknesses and vices. Nothing can be more deplorable...."

Of course, Tocqueville was a politician, and when has a politician *not* found journalists a "deplorable" bunch? Nevertheless, even the most disdainful media critics of old would be appalled by the degeneration of American journalism over the last 25 years. Reporters and editors in the prestige media today tend to be far more cynical and unforgiving than their counterparts in earlier generations. Churning just below the surface of much of their work is an instinctive antagonism, a bitterness toward the nation's preeminent institutions and personalities.

This alienated, contempt-laced journalism is most visible, and most destructive, in the coverage of national politics—the focus of Larry J. Sabato's *Feeding Frenzy*. A University of Virginia political scientist whose phone number is in almost every political reporter's Rolodex, Sabato was a conspicuous pundit during both the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill confrontation and the Bill Clinton/Gennifer Flowers imbroglio. Though his book went to press before these scandals, it not only foreshadowed them, it made sense of how the media covered them.

Sabato is no media hater. He writes admiringly of many of the 150 political journalists he interviewed for this book and notes in his preface his "genuine respect and admiration for what their life's work has produced, as well as a greater appreciation for the difficulties they face in undertaking it." Early on in *Feeding Frenzy*, moreover, he makes clear his disapproval of the speak-no-evil "lapdog journalism" that prevailed in the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s—the decades when reporters, by common consent, never reported that Franklin Roosevelt was severely crippled; that John F. Kennedy was a reckless, compulsive philanderer; or that powerful U.S. senators such as Russell Long of Louisiana or Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin were alcoholics.

But the transformation that has taken place since then, Sabato argues, has shot journalism to the other extreme. Political journalists stopped being lapdogs somewhere between the Supreme Court's 1964 decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan* and Sen. Ted Kennedy's fatal scandal at Chappaquiddick in 1969. The former eliminated for most journalists the fear of ever having to defend themselves against libel suits; the latter triggered in many of them a belief "that private life and individual character traits had such profound effects on politics and public policy that politicians' personal lives could no longer be ignored."

Sabato makes out a few good years in which the one-time lapdogs metamorphosed into careful "watchdogs." But in the wake of Watergate and the sex scandals of the mid-'70s that drove two powerful congressmen—Wilbur Mills and Wayne Hays—from office, "legitimate 'watchdog' journalism has spun out of control." Today, the watchdogs have become snarling "junkyard dogs."

"Ever since Watergate," Sabato concludes, "most investigative journalists' goal has been not just sensational revelation but the downfall of their target, a trophy head for their wall that is the (im)moral equivalent of Richard Nixon....The healthy adversarial relationship that naturally exists between the press and politicians has been sharpened to a razor's edge in the process. Many in the press are not merely skeptical of the pols, they are contemptuous of and corrosively cynical about them, and some reverse the usual presumption of innocence into 'guilty unless proven otherwise.' "

Combine that attitude with the indiscriminate blood lust of "piranha in the water," Sabato writes, and political journalism turns into a "feeding frenzy"—a phenomenon he defines as

"the press coverage attending any political event or circumstance where a critical mass of journalists leaps to cover the same embarrassing or scandalous subject and pursue it intensely, often excessively, and sometimes uncontrollably."

And, he might have added, joyfully. Barely a month after the Iran-Contra story first broke in November 1986, *Washington Post* Executive Editor Benjamin Bradlee vented his glee: "This is the most fun we've had since Watergate." Michael Kinsley, then editor of *The New Republic*, wrote: "Simple honesty requires any Washington type to admit that this is the kind of episode we all live for. The adrenaline is flowing like Perrier....C'mon, everybody, admit it. We're high....The fall of Reagan is a laughing matter....Repeat after me. Ha. Ha. Ha."

Not only are feeding-frenzy stories cropping up more often, they are focusing ever more relentlessly on personal/lifestyle/"character" issues. *Feeding Frenzy* dissects a host of examples: Gary Hart's mistress(es), Douglas Ginsburg's pot smoking, John Tower's drinking, Barney Frank's male prostitute, Michael Dukakis's "depression."

And Dan Quayle's—well, Dan Quayle's everything. Sabato is blistering in his condemnation of the media for what they did to Quayle in the summer of 1988—it was, he says, "the megafrenzy of post-Watergate campaigns," a hysterical, obsessive furor that lurched from topic to topic, oblivious to the line between fact and rumor, unable to distinguish legitimate news gathering from frantic scandal mongering. Everything became fuel for the media bonfire, whether it was true, false, or irrelevant: Quayle's wealth, his National Guard service, his connection to lobbyist/adulteress Paula Parkinson, his college grades, his alleged marijuana use and college plagiarism—even his name.

Sabato is harsh, though never shrill, in his judgments of journalists and media outlets who let fair reporting give way to indefensible "attack journalism." But just where that boundary is he often seems unsure himself. "No specific guidelines exist," he notes, "to enable journalists to navigate successfully...when a frenzy storm hits." He offers his own "set of guidelines to govern private-life frenzies" but admits that they "are not airtight, will not end the debate about privacy, and do not pretend to be a rote substitution for considered editorial judgment when a new frenzy arises."

Equally inconclusive is Sabato's effort to identify the "rules" of how scandal stories develop. Describing how a feeding frenzy swirling about one candidate will be affected by other candidates' actions, for example, Sabato first predicts that "irresistibly, rival candidates are drawn to the fray," then contradicts himself 24 lines later: "Not every rival camp launches an assault on a tempting target, however." Sabato also tries to have it both ways with the impact of public opinion: "At this juncture, the electorate...may either judge the candidate's offense as serious...or deem it insufficiently weighty to merit severe punishment." A two-page flow chart in *Feeding Frenzy* is practically a self-parody: A box labeled "Stage 4" of "Voter Reactions" lists the responses to a journalistic frenzy: "Voters accept problems as serious; candidate damaged OR Antipress backlash OR Voters reject frenzy problem; campaign moves on to other issues OR Combination."

Members of the press, once lapdogs, served as watchdogs for a while. Post-Watergate, Sabato writes, they have become snarling "junkyard dogs."

It is impossible to tell from this book or its case studies whether Sabato's politics are conservative or liberal. He blasts the failure of reporters to pursue "strong circumstantial evidence" of Jesse Jackson's marital infidelity but also describes as "most despicable" the rumor-fueled story that Michael Dukakis had been treated by a psychiatrist.

But while *Feeding Frenzy*'s politics are evenhanded, its emphasis is often misplaced. The Dukakis allegations—which were launched into the media mainstream in 1988 by *The Boston Globe* but never descended to anywhere near the level of a frenzy—consume as much space in the book as the section on the destruction of John Tower—a classic media frenzy in every sense. As much attention is devoted to a slander that became big news (that House Speaker Tom Foley is gay) as to one that never even appeared in print (that Quayle had an affair with a South Carolina woman). Sabato writes at length about how Gerald Ford's "free Poland" remark during a presidential debate was unfairly distorted by the press covering the 1976 campaign; yet he offers almost nothing on the financial irregularities of vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro (and her husband, John Zaccaro), which became a dominating issue in the 1984 campaign.

What are the sources of feeding-frenzy journalism? Here Sabato's insights are keen. The explosion in the number of journalists and the intensity of the 24-hour news cycle epitomized by CNN, he writes, create "a voracious news appetite demanding to be fed constantly, increasing the pressure to include marginal bits of information and gossip....In such situations any development is almost inevitably magnified and overscrutinized." Competitive pressures driven by the bottom line "propel each newspaper and network to try to make a contribution" to a burgeoning story and convert "balanced reporting into sensationalized headlines."

There are other factors too, and *Feeding Frenzy* is especially valuable for its analysis of their impact—from the "groupthink" mentality of pack journalism to the ubiquity of polling and the resulting "horserace" coverage of campaigns, from the guilt of older reporters who missed the early signs of the Watergate scandal to the ambition of younger colleagues, attracted by the glamour (and salaries) of modern celebrity journalism.

Sabato prescribes some commonsense remedies for feeding frenzies: Newspapers should hire more ombudsmen; media outlets should refuse to report

a story from another outlet until their own reporters have independently verified it; prominent journalists should serve as ethicists and "call a halt to the excesses seen in many frenzies." But he clearly doesn't envision a media reformation any time soon: "When all is said and done on this subject," he concludes, "it is a good bet that more will be said than done."

Perhaps. But here's a better wager: If American journalists don't learn, quickly, to police themselves more effectively, they are going to face a crippling repercussion from the public. An anti-press backlash is building. Consider a recent "Doonesbury" comic strip: In one panel, Pat Buchanan's enemies plot an attack on him based on "the only thing worse than having been a long-time member of the Ku Klux Klan." In the next panel, the scandalous behavior is raised at a press conference: "Mr. Buchanan, how do you explain your 17 years in the media?"

The phenomenon is not confined to the funny pages. There is a booming trade in media watchdogging, and most of its practitioners don't confine themselves to Sabato's calm and reasonable tone. Readers and viewers, as a mounting stack of public-opinion surveys document, increasingly see the media as untrustworthy, unethical, and too influential. Less and less is an uninhibited, nosy, aggressive free press seen as one of the glories—let alone one of the guarantors—of liberal democracy.

Perhaps this spreading antipathy toward journalists will manifest itself merely in a continued falloff in newspaper readers and TV-news watchers. But it is not that hard to envision a more dire scenario, with public anger leading to an erosion of press freedoms, demands for censorship, or legal bars on what journalists may write or say.

"In America," Oscar Wilde once remarked, "the president reigns for four years, but journalism reigns forever and ever." Wilde's cracks were frequently right on the money. But if American reporters and editors don't call a halt to the feeding-frenzy journalism that is poisoning the nation's politics, this is one Wilde remark that may turn out to be dead wrong.

Jeff Jacoby is chief editorial writer for the Boston Herald.

The Political Economy of the Death of God

BY STEVEN HAYWARD

Reaching for Heaven on Earth: The Theological Meaning of Economics
By Robert H. Nelson, Savage, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 378 pages, $24.95

Writing several years ago about the crisis in economic thought, Irving Kristol observed that, along with the general decrepitude of social science and moral philosophy, "theology has practically ceased to be a respectable form of intellectual activity." This circumstance, Kristol thought, leaves economists with moral passion nowhere to go.

Robert Nelson has taken up this profound challenge and has produced a treatment of this issue that goes beyond what might be called the Michael Novak Project, i.e., the religious sanctification of market economies. Nelson aims deeper, observing that even though the Enlightenment abandoned the idea of a transcendent God, the biblical view of man and society has remained largely intact. Material forces replaced natural and divine law, faith in Progress replaced faith in Providence, and economists replaced priests. Not just the form but even the substance of economics became theological in character.

Nelson aptly cites Keynes's remark that economic controversies resemble "medieval disputations at their worst." And Nelson has a point in observing that the wars of the 20th century in many ways took on the character of the religious wars of old partly on account of competing visions of political economy. If Nelson's thesis is ultimately judged defective, as I shall argue below, we must still give him his due for recognizing something very important. That economics, which was once considered a subdiscipline of political philosophy, can be regarded now as a theological discipline owes largely to the fact that it is the only humane science left with any intelligible idea of value.

"When studied with any degree of thoroughness," Irving Babbitt wrote way back in 1924, "the economic problem will be found to run into the political problem, the political problem in turn into the philosophical problem, and the philosophical problem itself to be almost indissolubly bound up at last with the religious problem." Babbitt's declension suggests perhaps that economics has achieved theological stature by default, on account of the various crises of the other humane sciences (theology included), and that Nelson is setting out on the right track.

The great virtue of *Reaching for Heaven on Earth* is that it squarely confronts the fact that the intelligible value of economic theology—Progress—is itself now in crisis. We still believe in material progress, of course, but we no longer believe, as "modern economic theology" has taught since the Enlightenment, that material progress is a sufficient basis for a general human progress. The faltering of the idea of progress is the defining characteristic of what everybody today is calling "the postmodern age." Hence, Nelson observes: "The character of the postmodern era may well be defined by the theological answer given to the loss of faith in modern progressivism and its various offshoots."

Rather than anticipate new theoretical breakthroughs, Nelson sees the shape of the postmodern age deriving from another oscillation between the two very old theological frameworks that Nelson understands generically as Romanism and Protestantism. From the Roman tradition we inherited the ideas of reason, law, private property, markets, economic growth, and the modern welfare state. From the Protestant tradition we inherited a distrust of reason and individualism, skepticism about human nature and the prospects for

human improvement, and belief in the inherent corruption of human institutions.

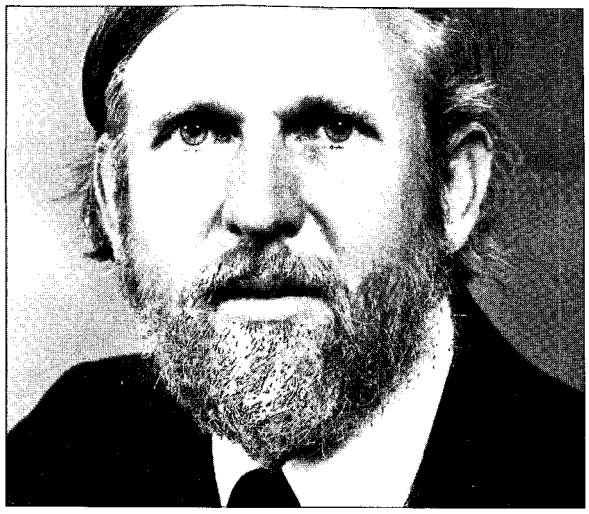
Nelson's discourses on which thinkers belong to which tradition are the most intriguing and compelling part of the book. Nelson provocatively challenges the familiar themes of Max Weber and others about the economic and political consequences of Romanism (and especially its derivative, Roman Catholicism) and Protestantism. Even if Protestantism tends mostly to generate disorder, Nelson nevertheless understands the necessity of protest in human affairs. (He even makes the old can't-live-with-it, can't-live-without-it gambit.) So, Nelson writes, "the current age is, in short, a Roman era that is being challenged by a new band of protesters against its theological foundations." With the demise of Marxian socialism, the most substantial protest to the present order comes from radical environmentalism, which supposes nature to be a God, instead of supposing there is a God of nature.

Having labored so exhaustively to establish the bipolar framework of Romanism and Protestantism, Nelson attempts to propel us into the postmodern age by harmonizing Roman order and Protestant pluralism. His constitutional device to accomplish this harmonization is something called "free secession." Nelson subordinates all principles of individual liberty and market economics to the principle of "free secession."

"The Right of free secession might thus supersede economic principles of free markets, free trade, and other past freedoms in providing a founding principle for a postmodern economic order," he writes.

The nation-state, Nelson thinks, is obsolete or even dangerous. Groups of people should be allowed to secede from their existing nations and form their own local political units, based on whatever values they prefer, mediated perhaps by several single-purpose world government agencies (arms control, environment, etc.). It sounds like an ugly crossbreeding between the New World Order and the spontaneous order.

There is no need to refight the American secession crisis of 1861, to which Nelson makes several unfortunate references, to see the defects of this scheme. The defects become apparent by pushing immediately to the reductio ad absurdum: What happens when single individuals decide to secede from everybody else and declare their solitary sovereignty?



Robert H. Nelson subordinates all principles of individual liberty to the principle of "free secession."

Don't laugh. There is an eccentric fellow in West Australia who has declared his ranch a sovereign nation. Prince Hal of Hutt River Province will stamp your passport and exchange currency to spend in his gift shop. The lack of a limiting principle to free secession, or the specter of individual sovereignty it presents, points back immediately to the necessity of individual rights and the limiting principle of government by consent of the governed. In this light, "free secession" is seen not as postmodernism but as a mere devolution of pluralism and individual rights that opens upon Hobbesian vistas.

Regardless of the merits of Nelson's prescriptions, it is not merely churlish to raise the deeper issue of whether Nelson's analysis is truly theological. Although Nelson skillfully insinuates a theological character to economics dating back to antiquity, economics does not really achieve its theological character until transcendent Providence is secularized through the idea of Progress. In other words, "economic theology" only achieves its theological status with the death of God.

But without a serious regard for transcendence, for a higher order beyond this order (*including*, perhaps, the immortality of the soul), Nelson's "economic theology" only takes on the form rather than the substance of theology. Theology without God is rather like football without the ball.

Why is this important? Although it is not immediately obvious, the rise of the kind of Scientific Progressivism represented by the death of God and "economic theology" presents serious theoretical challenges to individual rights and limited government. The metaphysical or transcendent basis for liberal democracy can be summarized as follows: Because men are not God or gods, unqualified wisdom is unavailable to man, and therefore unqualified power should never be entrusted to human hands.

This is not to say that one must believe in God to believe in the principles of limited government. Rather, it is simply to recognize that the secularization of Providence through Scientific Progress implies that unqualified wisdom—or complete explanation and mastery of human affairs—is possible, and hence that unqualified power can be benevolently exercised. By negating the Socratic skepticism that is the basis of limited government, modern secular theology diminishes the scope of human freedom.

Nelson's admirable attempt to rescue theology from irrelevancy and economics from the emptiness of value-free positivism does nothing to remedy this problem; in fact, it reinforces it. "Economic theology" and other secular progressivisms should abandon their claim to theological status. Nelson and others might be reluctant to do so, for such a step would relegate economics to the subdiscipline where it began.

Contributing Editor Steven Hayward is research and editorial director for the Pacific Research Institute in San Francisco.

BAD-FACE BANKING

BY THOMAS W. HAZLETT

The country is in a tizzy over the congressional check-kiting scandal, but I'm having a hard time even finding my pulse. I haven't been sleepier over a Washington "appearance of impropriety" since Nancy Reagan mysteriously procured fresh tableware. (Although I was positively woosie with Kitty Kelley's investigative report that a Woman in Red had been bodysurfing with Frankie at the White House.)

At bottom, the House "bank" is probably the least offensive congressional waste product in recent decades. If some flush members decided to cover tapped members' bounces—without a nickel of tribute from the deadbeats—the worst I can accuse them of is being as stupid with their own cash balances as they are with ours.

Right-wing flamers grasp desperately for a substantive taxpayer issue. The stretch they make is that *if* the bank *had* lost money, there was an even chance the U.S. Treasury would have had to cover it.

Well, I am glad that the issue of unfunded federal liabilities has finally gained popular attention. Although in our generation the bank has not lost any money, the theoretical possibility is disturbing, and I applaud those Americans who are Outraged! by the mere thought of it. Now, if only a calorie of this righteous indignation could be diverted toward the congressional scoundrels who were up to their eyeballs in a very untheoretical $500-billion S&L taxpayer wipeout....

The virtual reality of politics contains one fewer dimension than the number required for the exercise of fiscal sanity. The big screen of Washington is a Madonna-esque voguing stage upon which familiar caricatures of the Public Servant strike great symbolic poses. These flash across the public's consciousness monitor, conveying all the information the democratic system will accept. A photo op is worth a thousand words in the vogue dance of politics—indeed, *more*: What genius voter reads 1,000 words? Washington is run by those who can best manipulate the fleeting images of Concern, and the federal elections are the Olympics of public posturing.

The congressman—so richly the beneficiary of the pose, the gesture, the vogue—now considers himself the victim. "What did I do?" he asks. These are damn near the only honest words he will utter this year, because he honestly does not know why the public is so upset over his little banking deal. How cheap and tawdry of congressional critics (and the filthy Republicans; why, they bounced too!) to vilify the innocent goings-on here. No taxpayer was harmed. Taking these things out of context is absurd. These bounced checks weren't even returned NSF. Please, people, don't get so excited: *It only looks bad.*

This is where hardened agnostics begin to reconsider. Those who have made their living chiseling the facts, shaving the truth, sculpting reality, are framed by a hollow melodrama that *only looks bad.* How bloody perfect. How poetically just. How metaphysically juicy to see this arrogant body of spin controllers themselves spun right into the ground. All the better that they didn't even do anything really wrong. Those who gallivant the good life on bogus promises of being servants of the people—all edited beautifully and brought to you in living color courtesy of the PACs—certainly ought to understand the lack of content contained in so much of what we Americans see and believe in contemporary politics.

So far removed is Washington's proscenium arch from the halls of actual policy making that the presidential campaign's "economic debate" has, as usual, taken on a life entirely divorced from any returns excepting those recorded November 3, 1992. (Which is why the real debate is over *Capitol* gains.) Both parties must "turn the economy around" by concocting a legislative package designed to stimulate the private sector. (And you thought Jesse Helms had killed federal funding of indecency.) Let me let you in on a little secret: Nothing either party has up its sleeve will make so much as a 0.1-percent difference in the U.S. GNP this year. Whatever recovery there will be has already begun—fueled by Dr. Greenspan's 3.5-percent interest-rate elixir. And Washington can't help.

It could hurt, however. A Big Dumb move could send Wall Street south and spark a chain reaction. (Remember the tumble the Dow took last year after Sen. Al D'Amato proposed a credit-card interest-rate cap?) So, alertly, both parties stick to *Small* Dumb moves: innocuous enough not to destroy what is already in place, but sufficiently soundbiteable to allow its author to project that his potent cure-all will rescue the middle class from the ravages of (pick one): a) the GOP's mass joblessness or b) the Democrats' hyper taxes. Getting your marker down before the recovery hits allows you to claim the jackpot when the economy spurts, but the betting strategies are sophisticated: No big-time political gambler will fail to place a second stack of chips on some subplan that the other party will surely block. This way they're covered on all bets: boom, bust, or "sideways readjustment."

This is the heads-I-win-tails-you-lose world in which the Capitol gang is accustomed to scrimmaging. These political prophylactic devices do successfully shield our decision makers from ever coming into contact with a real policy decision, but they cost real Americans billions and billions. It just doesn't seem fair that something so remarkably inexpensive and unsinister as the House bank should create such a stir. Thank you, God.

Contributing Editor Thomas W. Hazlett teaches economics and public policy at the University of California, Davis.

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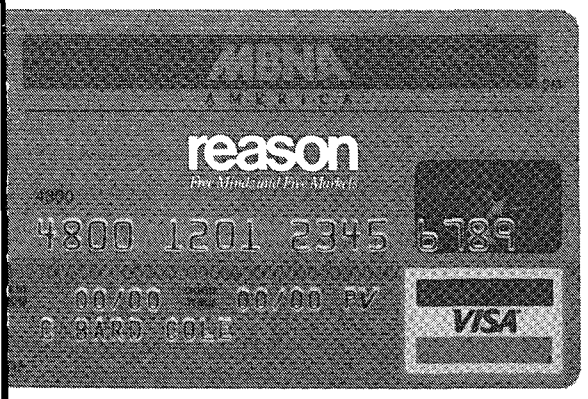

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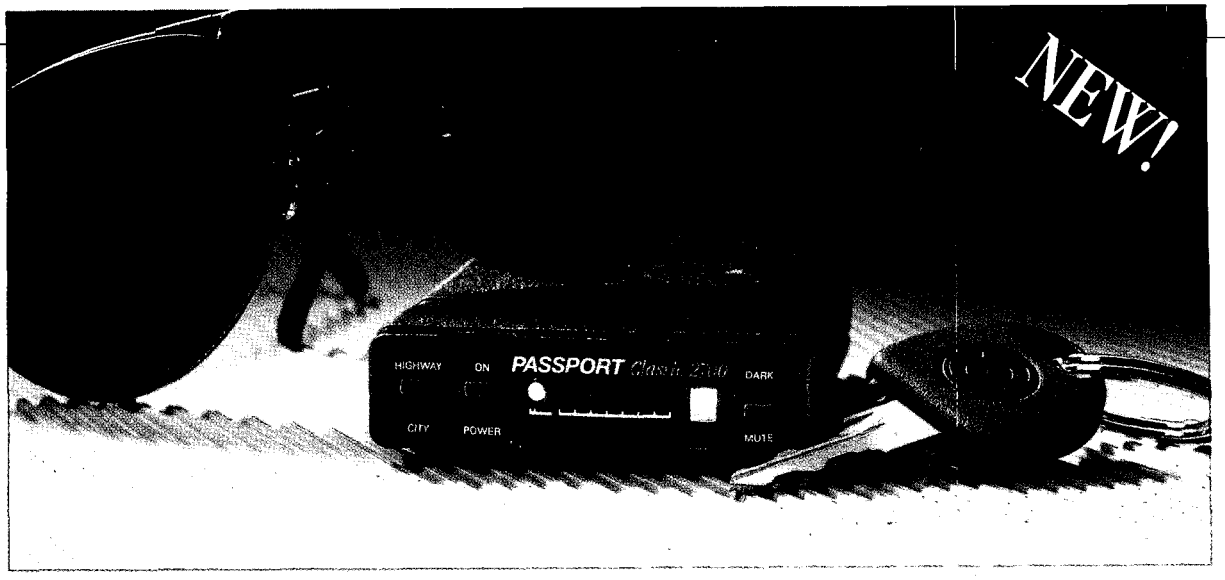

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